[illegible] AMTMANN

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AMTMANN CIRCLE

Library
of the
University of Toronto

Bernard Amtmann
1907–1979

Bernard Amtmann in the early 1970s

BERNARD AMTMANN
1907 - 1979
A PERSONAL MEMOIR

by John Mappin and John Archer

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BERNARD AMTMANN's early catalogues were more influential than any other single source in raising Canadiana from the level of the dusty five- and ten-cent shelf to the respected realm of antiquarian books. Though his encouragement and counsel were unstinting, one could always be assured of his frankness even if his comments had to be unflattering, and I think his candour may have lost him some friendships, though I suspect only amongst those who confused amity with flattery. I think perhaps librarians were the longest suffering of his victims and, however warranted his detracting judgements might be, it was sometimes difficult to recognize the justice contained within the insult! Life for those within the charmed circle of Bernard's influence was never dull.

Wm. F. E. Morley

Introduction

THIS IS NOT AN ATTEMPT at formal biography. It is the recollections of friends who admired Bernard Amtmann, and who wanted something of the man to be recorded for the future. We have tried to describe the Amtmann we knew: the man, his character, his talents, and his foibles. We have noted his strengths and weaknesses as we saw them, along with his enthusiasms and his bêtes noires. We have included a few facts for the record. The appendices offer a chronology of his life and work, of his publications, and of the auction house.

Above all, this is not an attempt at scholarship. We shudder at the thought that anyone should mistake it for a critical biography. If those who knew him think the work adequate, it will have served its purpose.

Bernard Amtmann lived thirty-two years in this country, arriving after the Second World War. He belonged to neither of what used to be called the Two Solitudes. He could live comfortably with either, although his background led him more naturally to French Canada. He could be critical of both, in particular of the criticisms that each had of the other.

He was fascinated by Canada and its untapped resources—as much historical and intellectual as mineral and hydro-electric. He plunged into Canadian history within weeks of his arrival, and with many of his new compatriots worked to reveal one of the more dramatic of national histories. He analysed and dissected the material that passed through his hands, much as a scientist does that which passes under his microscope. He told others about it and what it should mean to them, and was clearly annoyed when they did not share his views.

He was creative, imaginative and intuitive, warm, charming, and generous. He was cantankerous, stubborn, and bellicose, and he faced criticism as one who has been inoculated faces disease, with an attitude of imperturbable superiority. His life was his work, and his work was dealing with the materials of Canadian history: finding, studying, contemplating, buying, selling and evaluating.

We contend that for more than thirty years Bernard Amtmann made a significant contribution to the discovering and understanding of Canadian historical resources. That was why the idea came to Craig Fraser of creating the Amtmann Circle in his name. It is also the reason for this book.

B
A

I

IN NOVEMBER 1973 a book auction in Montreal included several items of exceptional interest, the most dramatic being some unpublished poems of Louis Riel. The Montreal *Gazette* had a feature article on Bernard Amtmann and his auction house, Montreal Book Auctions Ltd. The article included a brief history of the firm, and had a few lines about Amtmann, adding that he combined some of the essential talents of Socrates and Elmer Gantry. Amtmann read the article and, turning to a man examining the material, asked him, 'Who is Elmer Gantry?' The answer referred him to Sinclair Lewis and American hot-gospelling of the 1920s. Amtmann looked puzzled for a moment and then brightened, 'You mean the character played by Burt Lancaster in the movie?' An affirmative nod. 'Good! Good!' beamed Amtmann, delighted.

* * *

Bernard Amtmann was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1907. He left school at fourteen to go to work, and throughout the 1920s held a number of clerical jobs. He soon acquired the knowledge and the mental agility to survive. His little subsequent formal education was gained through evening courses at the university, where the students were encouraged to participate. Young Bernard did so with the enthusiasm that was to remain with him all his life, talking more than all the other students combined. One of his professors became a major influence in his formative years, and Bernard discussed and argued with him during the evening classes and after. One night, Bernard walked the professor home continuing the discussion. They went right by the door, walking and talking through the night, ending only with the dawn.

He tried his hand at a number of entrepreneurial ventures in the depression years of the 1930s with indifferent results. One was photography, where his ingenuity came up with a promising new process, but before it could become profitable the spectre of Nazism covered Europe. He left Vienna in 1938, on the day the German army arrived; he got his family out shortly after, and, with his mother and father, settled in France. He joined the French army and was stationed with his regiment in northern France. In the Spring of 1940, the German Blitzkrieg rolled over Holland and Belgium and into France. His regiment was overrun and its remnants swept south, with the masses of refugees fleeing the Germans. His parents, at first in Paris, also went south. Somehow, son and parents got together and found refuge in Montauban. There he worked at various manual jobs and joined the French underground army.

After the war, Amtmann worked for a couple of years in France and then emigrated to Canada. Before leaving France, he did a little buying and selling of old books. He arrived in Ottawa in the autumn of 1947, with two suitcases of books and a few dollars in cash, and in a matter of days was in the antiquarian book business. He soon realized that his future lay in Canadian books and his study of Canadian history started immediately.

The following year he issued his first catalogues. At the start they supplied an abundance of scholarly information, which helped establish him with the rare book librarians, who found them a delight to read and informative as well. The detailed descriptions tended to disappear after the early catalogues. They reappeared to some extent when rare material was catalogued though most of the rarities were sold to private collectors or librarians who visited his shop, or by telephone. Such descriptions were to reappear regularly when he started to produce the auction catalogues. In 1950, his imprint appeared for the first time, on his edition of *The North West Passage*, a poem by G. S. Venables, which had won the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge in 1831. Also in 1950 he moved to Montreal, and carried on his business in a small store on Greene Avenue, living on the same street above Sherbrooke, where it became Mount Pleasant Avenue. Later, his business was carried on from three different Sherbrooke Street West addresses—750, at the corner of Victoria Street, then 1176, at the corner of Stanley, and lastly at 1529, just east of Côte des Neiges.

As an adopted rather than a native son, he brought the passion of the convert to his field. His knowledge of German

French, and English gave him unusual access to material, and he recognized the significance of much that left others unmoved. He worked with a sense of drama, of discovery, of excitement, as he established the importance of pamphlets and printed ephemera. He rejected the alternatives of either ignoring Canadian history or being obsessed by it. His interest was pan-Canadian, not localized to one region, nor restricted to one aspect or language. His disdain for the parochial perspective was evident in discussion, and he argued that our history and the men who made it were uniquely fascinating. In a remarkably short time he acquired an extensive working knowledge, and, equally important, he learned how to establish facts and check references.

His independent spirit led to his later problems with some librarians and archivists. He could not understand the need for meetings and budgets and buying by committee. In his view the nature of bureaucratic structure was such that it filtered original thought from an enquiring mind until it was unable to think beyond institutional platitudes. He had contempt for small indigenous minds which did not understand or appreciate the immense heritage that was ours, the national self-denigrators happy to defer to the Old World or the United States.

Amtmann took people seriously. He asked pointed questions. He wished to discover early the aptitude of those he dealt with, whether a new acquaintance had that spark of originality that was his own dominant characteristic. He argued that the Canadian antiquarian book trade should become more professional, because it was to the dealers' mutual benefit to do so. By the early 1960s he had become convinced of the need for a trade association, and in time he convinced the more important of his colleagues. The result was the formation of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada, which held its first annual meeting in Ottawa in 1967. To encourage the exchange of ideas which the ABAC had started, he published *Abacus* and the first ten numbers of *Canadian Notes & Queries*, working with William Morley, then Curator of Special Collections at Queen's University. (For details, see Appendix B.)

People entering the trade found him a generous and helpful colleague. His knowledge and reference library were at their

disposal; he answered questions about material, he gave advice on pricing, he sold them good material cheap, and even made his mailing list available to newcomers preparing their first catalogues. He never talked down to the young nor patronized them. When the film *Mary Poppins* won a large number of young hearts, Amtmann met on the street one day a friend with an eight year old daughter. The friend, with ceremony, introduced the two, adding for his daughter's benefit: "Mr Amtmann is an expert on books, Jane. If you have a question about any book, I'm sure he'd be happy to answer it." Back came an enthusiastic question about Mary Poppins, provoking a delighted reply from the expert. The answer was informative and equally enthusiastic. It avoided details but included suggestions as to how further information might be had. A question about a book from an interested person had been treated with the respect it deserved.

During a career of thirty-two years, Amtmann issued about 400 lists and catalogues, some 280 through Bernard Amtmann Inc., and 120 from Montreal Book Auctions. In addition, he published nineteen volumes as author, compiler or publisher, several articles in his catalogues, others in periodicals, and many letters to the editor. His great ambition was to be in charge of a national bibliography.

Amtmann could be vitriolic and sometimes unfair, but his annoyance was often well-founded. Once, at a Toronto Book Fair in the mid 1970s, the acquisitions librarian of one of the wealthiest libraries in the country stopped at his booth and said, with a look of accomplishment on her face, that she had toured the entire fair and had managed to resist buying a single book. This woman, responsible for the development of an important collection, considered it a triumph to tour the booths of seventy-five leading dealers and to buy nothing, a sense of accomplishment embellished by a beaming self-satisfaction. To Amtmann, this was the negative outlook of too many librarians refined to its essence. It was the sort of thing that had him into his armour and on to the field of battle. He was a formidable foe. He heaped ridicule and scorn on the fat cats of the Canadian book world, and he was right often enough to maintain the affection and respect of most of the best of them. There is little

doubt that he often acted contrary to his own economic interest.

If his polemics produced crises with an air of artificiality about them, they increased his effectiveness in a way that gentle argument could not. His penchant for rushing to the podium or having a press conference to air his views and grind his axes, made Canadian institutions more sensitive to their obligation to acquire important material.

Amtmann did business under his own name, and then branched out into literary first editions, in partnership with Laurie Lerew, formerly an employee. He founded the first Canadian book auction firm. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1970, and received an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan in 1974.

He was of slight build, five feet six and one hundred and twenty-five pounds. He ate sparingly, drank a little wine, chain smoked, and drank endless cups of coffee. In his later years he suffered from heart trouble. In the autumn of 1978, he entered hospital for the last time. He died in his 72nd year, on January 9, 1979.

In the few pages of autobiographical notes he left, he asked with untypical wistfulness if he hadn't been too critical, too much of a gadfly. He must have written that on a bad day. The essential Amtmann could never accept a *status quo* or admit an error. After his death, one admirer admitted to having had more battles with Bernard Amtmann than with the rest of the book world combined, and added that his respect and affection continued undiminished. The spark of his genius was as difficult to grasp as it was to define.

II

BERNARD AMTMANN was born in Vienna on July 11, 1907, the first of three children of Jacob Emil Amtmann and his wife, Amalia Wengraf. The following year a daughter, Johanna (usually known as Hansi), was born, and two years later a second son, Willy. The family was Jewish and well integrated into an Austrian society that had for generations welcomed the cultural gifts and business acumen of the Jews. They were of modest means, but learning, music, and the arts were important elements of their family life.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire which had been a force in Europe for generations was now in its last years. The First World War broke out and Jacob Amtmann served in the Austrian army. Defeat in 1918 brought the dismemberment of the Empire, the creation of new nation states, a much reduced Austria, and ensuing economic chaos. Austria became a republic. Vienna, one of the great cities of Europe, lost much of its economic and cultural supremacy as the Empire disintegrated. By 1919 conditions at home had become so bad that the children were sent to foster homes abroad to avoid starvation. They returned the following year as conditions improved.

At school the language of instruction was German, with French taught as a second language and English available if desired. Musical evenings were a regular event among the Amtmann family and friends. Their father was an avid reader, a regular patron of two of the local public libraries, bringing home books to encourage the children to read. The Amtmann children produced plays and concerts in the home. Typically Bernard took charge. He wrote the material, allocated parts and directed the production. Willy handled the music and Hansi was the cashier, and the invited friends and relatives were charged a small fee to cover the costs of production. Theirs was a particularly happy family, together after the trauma of war and want. Their religious life was relaxed. They observed the High Holidays but otherwise followed for the most part the typical lives of the lower middle class. Even as a youth, Bernard

tended to look at the world from a rationalist, secular view. At fourteen he left school and went to work, the normal course for a young man of his circumstances.

He worked first as a messenger and then became an apprentice in a bank. The work was boring, with little challenge at his level. He left and got a job with a printing company. He became engrossed in photography, photographic equipment, and printing machines. There was scope for a young, active mind in a period of innovation. His new job went well, and in 1934 he was able to establish his own business in photographic supplies. He opened an office with Hansi as his assistant. His home was his warehouse. It was a small beginning but it meant independence and the opportunity to be creative.

The university was beyond reach, but there were evening courses available. Bernard was interested in philosophy and had the good fortune to study under Dr. Wilhelm Lowinger, an able professor with the ability to nourish hungry young minds. Lowinger responded kindly to the youthful enthusiast who tended to dominate the discussions in class, and the two would often argue and discuss well into the night. Under Lowinger's influence, Bernard's philosophical development led him to agnosticism. He looked at the world from a secular perspective; politically his were the evolving views of the young social democrat. His emotions became as volatile as his ideas. He fell in love in the late 1930s and probably would have married but for the signs of approaching war.

Jacob Amsmann lost his job in the Great Depression, but Bernard's business prospered. The photographic field was in a period of transition, and he was fascinated by the new technologies and processes which appeared ready to revolutionize the world of photography.

Economic chaos weakened the liberal democracies and brought on the rise of totalitarianism. Germany, burdened by war debts, unemployment, and food shortages, fell prey to nationalism. Adolf Hitler led the National Socialist German Workers' Party to power, promising to regain for Germany her rightful place in the world, to reassert German pride, and to escape the punitive conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. Jews throughout Europe watched with apprehension as the Nazis

secured their rule at home, and moved without serious opposition to expand their borders in Europe. In Austria, a new constitution was adopted on May 1, 1934, which established a quasi-Christian fascist state. Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered by Nazi stormtroopers in Vienna on July 25, 1934.

Meanwhile, Bernard had become acquainted with a man working on an invention to revolutionize existing methods of copying and reproducing prints. They became partners as Bernard agreed to finance the research, and in due course he decided to go to London to attempt to sell the process after it had progressed to the appropriate point. Before he could go, conditions worsened in Austria as the local Nazi movement became increasingly powerful. Secret police prepared lists of communists and Jews. The German Army entered Austria on March 11, 1938. The following day Bernard and his partner left Vienna and made their way to France.

Once in France, Bernard tried to go to London, but with the imminence of war England had closed its borders to many refugees in the interest of national security. He could not return to Vienna. An immigrant without papers in France in 1938 had little chance of jobs. He decided upon a course of action which would satisfy his sense of honour and give him security: he volunteered for the French army, was accepted and sent to a regiment at Auxerre in the north of France. This gave him a recognized status in France.

Hansi had been permitted to emigrate to Britain where she had obtained employment as a domestic servant. The senior Ammanns had returned home one evening to find the keyhole of their door filled with lead. They went into hiding for a few days until a train journey was arranged that took them to the French-German border. A car picked them up and took them to lodgings that Bernard had arranged for them in Paris.

Only Willy remained in Vienna and he was in danger. Hansi explained the problem to her English employer who provided the solution, by arranging a ship's passage for Willy with Shanghai as the alleged destination. The ruse worked and Willy was allowed to enter England just before war broke out between Germany and Britain. As an alien from a potentially enemy country there were difficulties. He volunteered for the British army and was accepted, but on the outbreak of war he was discharged and sent into internment in Canada as an enemy alien of military age. Willy studied draughtsmanship in the camp and was able to keep up his music, providing entertainment for the staff and his fellow internees. It was a relaxed confinement but still imprisonment in a strange country, far from family and friends.

Bernard corresponded regularly with Hansi until the end of the so-called phony war. He wrote in English to make himself more familiar with the language and Hansi had his letters corrected and sent them back. Life continued with Bernard in the army in the north and his parents in Paris, until the war started in earnest in the spring of 1940. The German Blitzkrieg rolled over Holland and Belgium and into France. Bernard's regiment was overrun and its survivors swept south along with the masses of refugees fleeing the Germans. His parents left Paris and reached Nevers. France surrendered and the Germans occupied much of the country. Bernard and his parents went on to unoccupied France and settled quietly in Montauban. Bernard did various menial jobs and joined the Resistance, the French underground army.

He got a job as a waiter in a hotel frequented by German officers. With his knowledge of French and German and some English, he became an interpreter for the Germans, a position which informed him about German activities in the area. His underground unit was engaged in sabotage. Wiry and tough, inventive and determined, Bernard became a sergeant in the Resistance, with the cover name of Amouroux. There was always the danger of a slip, of knowing too much, of showing some emotion when the diners discussed a train derailment or a sabotaged factory.

His parents grew old and his father died. He was buried in Montauban. His mother lost interest in the world and was finally taken by Bernard to a convent, where she was cared for and hidden from the Germans.

In June, 1944, the Allies invaded Normandy. Bernard's group, along with the other Resistance units, joined the Free French forces as regulars. He fought in various actions as the Allies battled their way through France and into Germany. The

Germans surrendered in May, 1945, and Hansi was able to visit her family during the summer. They and their mother discussed the future and agreed they would not return to Vienna. They would make a fresh start in the New World. Hansi had been engaged to a young Austrian, prior to her going to England in 1938. His name was Bruno Lamberger, and he had gone to Rhodesia the same year that she went to England. After the war they married and moved to New York.

In Canada, Willy had been released from internment in October 1942. His training as a draughtsman in the camp provided him with qualifications which enabled him to get a job with an architect. He had also given music lessons and later he was to return to music as a teacher with the Ottawa Board of Education, and, years later, to publish a history of music in Canada.* By 1947, Willy was established in Ottawa. Bernard and his mother were unable to go to New York because this could only be done under the quota system for Austrian immigrants. It would be easier to go to Ottawa, and in many ways Canada was more attractive. It, too, offered freedom, opportunity, and unlimited potential. In addition, there was a large French-speaking element, and in French Canada something of the atmosphere of the Old World. After the usual delays, Bernard and his mother arrived in Ottawa in October 1947.

Bernard was now forty years of age. He arrived in Canada with two suitcases of books and a few dollars in Canadian currency. On his way he had stopped in London and met several leading antiquarian book dealers. His lifelong interest in books and writing found a new avenue for development. He came to Canada determined to enter the old book trade. It was a

good time to do so. The Canadian government had commissioned Vincent Massey to head a review of the arts, letters, and sciences, and to make recommendations as to how best they might be encouraged. Universities and public libraries were about to enter the golden age of their expansion, with large amounts of money becoming available to increase their library holdings, and there was soon to be founded the National Library of Canada.

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*The idea of writing the history occurred to Willy one day while browsing through old books on Bernard's shelves. Bernard encouraged and guided him, which led Willy first to his doctoral thesis and then on to the book. The English edition appeared in 1975 and the French edition the following year. In his preface, Willy paid his brother the following tribute: "Special gratitude is due my brother Bernard, whose book collection of Canadiana sparked [my] curiosity and whose enthusiasm for historical research inspired the desire to trace the springs of musical art in Early Quebec." (See Appendix [illegible].)

Bernard's most pressing need was to earn a living for himself and his mother. He made his first sale within days of arriving in Ottawa, and immersed himself in the study of Canadian history. He spent hours in the Public Archives and the Library of Parliament, studying and familiarizing himself with their resources.

In his first two years in Ottawa he produced and distributed four catalogues of old books. They included poetry, religion, and history, as well as Canadiana. He made a living from the start by hard work and careful management, and having that indispensable flair for recognizing rare and important material. In his first catalogue he listed William Parry's *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* ..., London, 1842, at $12.00, and Samuel Hearne's *Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson Bay* ..., London, 1795, at $125.00. He also stated he expected both to rise in value in the future. In 1979 the Parry was selling for $200.00 and in 1986 it sold for $650.00. The Hearne sold for $1,200.00 at auction in 1979.

Hans and Bruno Lamberger moved to Montreal from New York in early October, 1950, and Bernard pondered the same move. Montreal was a better city for book dealers and there were more collectors. It was largely a French-speaking city, bigger than Ottawa and more cosmopolitan. His mother had been unable to visit Hans in New York because of immigration restrictions. Bernard and his mother moved to Montreal in early November, 1950.

III

BERNARD AMTMANN opened a store on Greene Avenue in Westmount in May 1951 first briefly at 1215 and then at 1247 exactly where the entrance to Westmount Square is today He began to develop a walk-in trade a regular retail business in addition to his catalogue business and he became increasingly aware of the importance of printed ephemera

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ephemera as insect[s] living only a day [a] short-lived thing. Printed ephemera are anything printed to serve a specific purpose a politician's poster or handbill in the days leading to an election a notice announcing the arrival of the circus or an itinerant pedlar of patent medicines They range in substance from the Proclamations of 1792 announcing the granting of land to Loyalists in the Eastern Townships and Upper Canada to the invitation by a merchant in a small town to his end-of-season clearance sale They often took the form of broadsides a single sheet printed on one side which sometimes appeared as advertisements in local newspapers as well

A random selection might include a legal form from the 1840s with the blanks to be filled in a warning to citizens to beware of rabid dogs in Quebec City in 1819 a licence to sell spirituous liquors from the 1830s a notice advertising a reward for information leading to the arrest of an arsonist who set fire to a lumber mill in Hawkesbury Ontario in 1844 a sale of needlework in a church bazaar in Quebec City in 1855 the Annual Meeting of the Fruit Growers Association of Upper Canada in St Catharines Ontario in 1864 the Grand Entertainment of the Y W C T U of Aylmer Ontario in January 1888 Sir John A Macdonald's bookplate and a Boer War Christmas card sent home by a member of the Canadian contingent in South Africa

The importance of printed ephemera has increased in recent years with the emphasis on social history who knew that Quebec City had a problem with rabid dogs in 1819? Or that an arsonist set fire to a paper mill in Hawkesbury in 1844? Or that the reward notice was printed by Armour in Montreal? These and a near infinite number of other purposes and causes are recorded primarily, and sometimes only, in printed ephemera, nailed to trees and handed to passersby, destined to disappear in the wind and the rain.

There have been thousands of these items printed throughout the years, almost all thrown away or used to light fires. Occasionally someone kept some of them: perhaps a mother because a son was running for office, a benevolent society with a meticulous secretary keeping records, or a printer maintaining his files. Most decades had their distinctive styles of printing; the 1810s, the 1850s, and the 1890s differ substantially, and a collection of a dozen samples from each year would provide a succinct history of Canadian printing in the nineteenth century available in no other way, and one that would fit in a suitcase.

Ephemera were indispensable to the political process, recording spontaneous reactions to the issues of the day, dashed off rather than planned, polemical rather than scholarly. They refuted and rebutted, they heaped ridicule and scorn. They were often anonymous to avoid libel or physical assault. They were contemporary, contentious, and argumentative, valuable historical documents and primary sources. Crudely printed and cheaply produced, they became victims of time and wear, ignored as unscholarly and intemperate.

Nowadays, we are inundated with ephemera at every election. Parties and candidates publish a vast quantity of material and some libraries collect it as it appears. Probably less than five percent of those published in the nineteenth century are recorded, and as material on the Rebellion of 1837, the question of Confederation, the Riel Rebellions of 1870 and 1885, and the building of the CPR is found, it is sought after and commands a high price.

Amtmann was soon at home in the antiquarian book business in Montreal. He moved comfortably in both the French and English milieux, and if his business developed more in the English milieu it was because of the greater size of the North American English-speaking market. He soon had a ready facility in English. Throughout his career he sought advice on how to express his thoughts, but his written and spoken English

soon surpassed that of the average anglophone citizen. His letters, briefs, and papers argued his case with competence, eloquence, and assurance. He was probably more relaxed, more naturally at home with the francophone writers and intellectuals, many of whom became friends or friendly acquaintances. His tastes in food and drink and his view of life in general were more French than English.

The Canadian Library Association held its annual meetings in different cities across the country. Ammann sometimes attended, finding them excellent opportunities to meet the leading librarians, to make friends, to exchange views, and to find new customers. Many, from the time of their first meeting, looked to him as a source of information and important material, and his shop attracted customers from all over the country. Academics, students, collectors, publishers of small presses tended to gravitate to his shop and usually were shown new and coming material to examine and consider. Ammann had a flair for bringing along the small collector, for encouraging him and finding him fine items that weren't expensive, but, at the same time, looking forward to the day when the novice would be in the market for rare material. Lord Beaverbrook, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Gregory Javitch were among the important collectors who frequented his shop, and no dealer played a more important role than he did in building the notable collections of Lawrence Lande.

His knowledge of Canadian material and the major holdings of it in Canada and the United States continued to grow as he studied the bibliographies. He learned the importance of agrarian radicals in Western Canada, the role both religious and secular of the church in French Canada, and the influence of the Loyalist tradition throughout English Eastern Canada, and he continued to find books, pamphlets, and ephemera that were not recorded.

His sister Hanar had originally worked as a seamstress in Montreal. As his business grew, both she and her husband worked in the bookshop. In 1956, she joined her brother full time. She opened the store, looked after orders, served customers, and managed the accounts. Her manner and presence inspired confidence and gave an air of stability and order to the business. Ammann was an early riser and often worked long into the night. He was frequently away from the office looking for material, and he depended on his sister, in effect the office manager, to look after things in his absence.

As the universities expanded, there was increasing demand for books. Developing Canadian studies required ever-increasing library resources, with special collections more and more prominent. He added another assistant, Laurie Lerew, an Australian who had settled in Montreal. In 1960 the American Library Association and the Canadian Library Association both held conventions in Montreal. The presence of thousands of librarians offered a unique opportunity to booksellers, and Mrs. Lerew quickly proved a useful addition to the Ammann team. In the fall of 196[illegible] he set up Laurie Hill Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Bernard Ammann Inc., to deal in non-Canadian material and modern first editions. Laurie Lerew was in charge and the business did well from the start.

The 1960s saw an unprecedented growth in the number of new Canadian universities and graduate schools. There was likewise a proliferation of community colleges. All these institutions required vast quantities of books, and sales escalated dramatically, matched by the output of Ammann catalogues. In 1958 and 1959 twenty-four and twenty-three lists and catalogues were published, respectively. The total from 1956 to 1960 was eighty-seven. 1961 to 1966 saw one hundred and fifteen, with the extraordinary number of forty in 1962 alone.

It was during this lavish period that universities, for instance York and Alberta, bought the entire contents of bookshops and, in the case of the University of Alberta, acquired the proprietor as well, to be in charge of acquisitions. Ammann worked out an arrangement with some institutions to provide quantities of material at a unit price. When Queen's decided to build a comprehensive collection of basic material relating to French Canada, he shipped them everything he thought appropriate and the university returned those titles they already had. It may sound peculiar at this distance and in a period of declining acquisitions, but it was practical in those days of vast budgets and small holdings. Queen's acquired thousands of titles at unit price well below their current catalogue value. He offered the same arrangement to other institutions, most of which declined, on the grounds that they, not the bookseller, should decide what was appropriate to their collections. Bernard, not very reasonably, resented their presumption.

With so much demand the prices of both new and old books rose dramatically. New books doubled in price in less than a decade. Early Champlain Society volumes quadrupled in price in fifteen years. The beautiful first volume of the Lande Bibliography appeared in 1965, perhaps the finest book ever produced in Canada. It was published in two limited editions, the fine at $350 and the trade at $135, although the term "trade edition" sounds peculiar when used to describe so outstanding a production.

Amtmann was delightedly in the vanguard as prices soared, although he faced growing criticism from librarians. Collectors were generally pleased when they had higher valuations on their collections, but less so when they attempted to buy. The best titles always sold at any price, even after buyers' resistance finally brought a little order to the market. Amtmann began to enjoy entertaining as he achieved a measure of financial stability. He became a connoisseur of the better restaurants. He enjoyed the sauna baths at Le Cartier, dined and played bridge with friends, bought and sold, and talked history, literature, books and bibliography.

In his reflective moments, he dreamed about a large and important company, involved in all aspects of the antiquarian book business. It would operate world wide and he would run it from Montreal. It would include rare books, literature, first editions, manuscripts, unrecorded pamphlets, and the finest maps. It would have an auction house and a publishing house. Lost material would reappear and it would be marketed with its significance revealed and its splendour properly described. How he would have delighted in that extraordinary letter of Sir John A. Macdonald that Craig Fraser offered for sale through Canada Book Auctions on December 3, 1979, in sale 122, as lot 46.

Macdonald had been in England for several months negotiating the final form of the British North America Act, which was to bring about Canadian Confederation. He wrote to Sir Henry James Sumner Maine in Calcutta, from London, April 9, 1867:

It was a long letter, entirely in Sir John's hand, discussing the legal development of Lower Canada and concluding with the following remarkable statement:

> I have been in England since November & at last succeeded. I sail in 4 days for Canada with the act uniting all British America in my pocket. A brilliant future would certainly await us were it not for these wretched Yankees, who hunger & thirst for Naboth's field [i.e., Canada] – War will come someday between England and the United States and India can do us Yeoman's service by sending an army of Sikhs – Ghoorkas, Beloochees, etc, etc., across the Pacific to St. [sic] Francisco and holding that beautiful and immoral city with the surrounding Californias as security for Montreal and Canada.

Was Macdonald serious? He certainly wasn't drunk, his stereotype notwithstanding, for it comes at the end of a long discussion of complex legal questions cogently expressed. It is known that some members of Lincoln's cabinet had wanted to keep the Northern Army intact after the American Civil War to conquer Canada in the interest of American Manifest Destiny. There had been recent Fenian raids into Canada from American bases. The Biblical reference may seem obscure to some today, but what is clear is that the Prime Minister of Canada was apprehensive about a possible American invasion. By the time Ammann had organized the publicity (and appeared on American television news!) the letter would have been known throughout the English-speaking world and beyond.

IV

THE IDEA OF AN AUCTION HOUSE had been in Bernard Amtmann's mind for years. The big auction houses of the United States, Britain, and France auctioned books, but they auctioned other things as well: paintings, silver, china, weapons, manuscripts, anything that appeared likely to create interest and revenue. Amtmann wanted an auction house dealing exclusively with books, manuscripts, pamphlets, maps, prints and the like, so that these might be recognized for their own importance, rather than as marginal activities of firms specializing in other things. He had in the past encouraged others to establish such a house, but without result. When a fine opportunity presented itself, Bernard leaped into the breach.

He had been asked by the president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec to appraise their library's holdings. The Society is the oldest of Canadian learned societies, its antecedents going back to a public library started by Governor Haldimand in 1780. Its interest in history, natural history, science and literature started in the early nineteenth century, and its first publication appeared in 1829. Its library has continued to the present day, a small public library in Quebec City catering to the English-speaking and -reading public of the Old Capital. In 1966 it faced an acute shortage of operating funds. Some of its valuable holdings were more of American than of local interest, and even some of the local titles might be better held by larger libraries with modern means of conservation and security. Amtmann recommended that a number of the more valuable books be put up to public auction, and the less valuable books be disposed of through a dealer. The Society agreed and asked him to manage the sale.

With a large number of dramatic items available from so illustrious a source, and no book auction available in Montreal, he decided to fill the lack himself. He formed Montreal Book Auctions Ltd. and arranged the first sale for the spring of 1967. It was held in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal, April 26, 1967. It was well organized and well promoted and aroused much public interest; it was a financial success, with sales of close to $50,000, or more than $200,000 in terms of the value of money in 1987. Two of the more dramatic items were a made-up atlas of contemporary maps of the American Revolutionary War, and a copy of the first book printed in Montreal, the rare first edition of the *Reglement de la Confrérie de l'adoration perpétuelle du Saint Sacrement et de la bonne mort* (Tremaine, *Canadian Imprints*, 230), printed by Fleury Mesplet in 1776. The buyers included prominent institutions in Quebec and Ontario, American universities, and British antiquarian book dealers, among them the firm of Charles W. Traylen of Guildford, England.

Amtmann was quick to learn that the success of an auction depended upon the arrangement of the lots offered, the presiding auctioneer, the promotion of the sale, and above all on the material put up for sale. Rare and important material carefully placed throughout the auction will bring good prices and enhance the value of the ordinary material that must provide the bread and butter. Exciting items arouse interest from around the world.

Montreal Book Auctions held six sales between April, 1967 and November, 1968, and shortly after the sixth it was announced that Christie, Manson & Woods of London had bought into Montreal Book Auctions in a joint venture, which saw the London firm with four members on the board of directors along with Bernard Amtmann, Laura Lerew, and Arthur Gill, a Montreal businessman and art collector. The new company held twenty sales from April, 1969, to September, 1970, eighteen in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal, one in Ottawa and one in Calgary, in April and September, 1970, respectively. The joint venture was dissolved in some bitterness in October 1970.

Amtmann had emphasized from the beginning that the purpose of the new company was not to create a Canadian arm of the London firm but rather to establish Montreal as an international centre for fine art, and to attract Canadian material back to Canada to be sold at auction. There was a clash of policies and personalities. With the dissolution of the joint venture, Bernard reactivated Montreal Book Auctions, and he held an auction at the Ritz in December, 1970. Christie's continued, briefly, to operate in Montreal with Laurie Lerew as their Montreal agent. Montreal Book Auctions continued until Bernard's death. It was subsequently sold to a group headed by Craig Fraser, the proprietor of Specialty Book Concern. The new owners moved the business to Toronto and changed the name to Canada Book Auctions. (For details of the history of the auction house, see Appendix c.)

By the time Amtmann returned to the auction business on his own, his reputation had led to an increasing demand for his services as an appraiser. Most of the valuations were done for private individuals or estates. Some were for government and academic institutions. They were a useful source of income and sometimes of material as well. His advice was often sought on the disposal of duplicates and collections, which provided him with a supply of books and manuscripts. He had hoped to interest friends among the librarians and archivists across the country to form a corps of appraisers to advise on the disposal of duplicates and thus encourage material back into the market. The scheme never materialized because his friends wished to avoid the possibility of apparent conflict of interest, so most of them rejected the idea out of hand. Later, the Canadian Government, through its Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board, popularly known as the Cultural Property Board, provided something of the kind, by offering tax concessions to those who turn national treasures over to recognized repositories. The Board has worked well thus far, and for the most part has managed to avoid certain sleazy practices which have plagued such donations in the United States.

Amtmann's interests led him to join many associations and societies, in particular those related to bibliography, book collecting, and publishing. He saw the need for a society of dealers in this country and was instrumental in forming the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada. Early in 1963 he began to discuss the formation of such a society with his colleagues. He stressed the advantages of a forum for an exchange of views. There was an increasing interest shown by the trade over the years and in due course the association was formed. The first annual meeting was held in Ottawa in 1967, and the association

has grown in importance through the years.

He was also active in the many attempts to form associations of bibliophiles, some of which held regular meetings. Most of them had a following for a while and then disappeared. When good intentions failed to sustain a number of such organizations, he began one of his own. He founded the Erasmus Circle in 1968. It was, he said, an informal organization of bookmen and bibliophiles who met from time to time to discuss matters relevant to the world of books. The Erasmus Circle had no conventional membership. Anyone who turned up to a meeting was considered a member. Bernard got the idea (as well as the name) from a sentence in a letter from King Francis I of France to the Dutch philosopher, "I want you to know that if you are willing to come you will be most welcome."*

Under his hand the Circle published several issues of a bulletin, and organized a symposium held in conjunction with the Antiquarian Book Fair in Montreal in July 1971. The subject for discussion was a recurring theme, and one of increasing sensitivity at the time, the relationship between antiquarian booksellers, collectors, academics, librarians, and archivists. In his remarks opening the symposium, Amtmann said that, as founder, he felt it inappropriate to take a leading part, but that such a society might encourage Canadians to broaden their outlooks. The idea for the Circle had come to him while visiting the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia. "I was fascinated to be in a place where the spirit of the greatest American bookseller, one of the greatest of bibliophiles, has been kept alive." He thought in the future the Circle might provide pleasure in the form of a fine dinner in addition to providing food for the mind. Canada lacked such a society, and the Erasmus Circle, centered in Montreal, should be a symbol of the two cultures. "Le Cercle Erasme could become a symbol for what Montreal with its dual culture could be now and for the future." Bernard did what he could to infuse his own enthusiasm and drive into the society. He obtained from Clive Driver, Director of the Rosenbach

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*The postscript to a letter written from Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 7 July [1523]. We owe this reference to Dr. Ron Schoeffel of the University of Toronto Press.

Foundation, the famous Erasmus Bible, one of three copies printed on vellum, to be exhibited at the Montreal meeting. The event created interest and publicity, but the Erasmus Circle itself faded into oblivion in the ensuing months.

In conjunction with his role in the formation of the ABAC, Bernard's office published *Abacus* and the first ten numbers of *Canadian Notes and Queries*, with news, views, information, and questions relating to Canadiana studies. The latter was carried on by William Morley after Bernard's death, with Michel Thérault, and others later, as associate editor.

With the revival of his own auction business, Amtmann looked for continuing support from collectors, public libraries, the universities, and above all from the National Library and the Public Archives in Ottawa. The excitement of the auction had captivated him, and the participation of the major libraries and archives publicized their commitment in a way that receiving and ordering from a catalogue could not. This, however, led to an odd situation, and one which showed him at other than his best. He had been criticized for the prices of some of his rare material, and he thought the auction offered the means of answering that criticism. If there was open competition for a fine piece of rare Canadiana, if a free market prevailed, then the marketplace would decide the right price. He was annoyed when the institutions agreed among themselves not to compete in certain areas and for some of the rarest material. The same people who criticized his prices would agree among themselves not to let the free market determine what the price should be. Collusion (he thundered, to anyone who happened to be around), producing a combination in restraint of trade.

In fact, such arrangements, illegal or otherwise, could only eliminate a few potential competitors; the nation's libraries often disagreed among themselves, and the abler collection builders only let the books they really wanted go elsewhere with the greatest reluctance. He was especially critical of archivists. He came to view archivists as the bane of antiquarian booksellers because they tended to believe that unique items of historical importance belonged to them by right. They were not used to paying for manuscripts and they wanted no competition from antiquarian booksellers who had to be businessmen as well as scholars. He rejected the lofty ideals which flowed as patriotic claptrap from behind the archivists' walls as they basked somnolent in their tenure. Bookdealers were as patriotic as archivists, and examples were legion of important material being offered free to archivists who returned it as unworthy and then bought it when it was offered for sale by a dealer who had recognized its importance. Canadian material was being bought by foreign collectors and institutions. As things were, he maintained, significant pieces of the Canadian heritage were being bought by Americans for American institutions. If the custodians of the artifacts of our heritage were really concerned over the loss of national treasures, they could save them by outbidding the foreign competition at auction.

His views found ready access to the newspapers. Dr. Wilfred Smith, the Dominion Archivist, replied, scoffing at the suggestion that much Canadian material of historical importance was finding its way to the United States. He suggested that the publicity given in the press helped the cause of opportunistic sellers and urged Canadian archival repositories to resist being held to ransom by the bogey of American buyers ready to pay exorbitant prices for manuscripts. Canada was already carrying on a steady and vigorous repatriation of historical manuscripts and records from France, Great Britain, and the United States. Instead of spending large sums of money on single documents such as the incomplete McLeod Diary, it was 'better to use our limited resources on acquisition and preservation of important collections of lasting research value, which will truly represent the heritage of Canada.' (Letter to the *Montreal Star*, November 30, 1971.) Amtmann refrained from further comment at the time, but noted that it was no thanks to the Public Archives that the Riel Diary remained in Canada, since they had dropped out of the bidding early, and it had been left to a private Canadian citizen, a Métis and former Member of Parliament, Gene Rhéaume, to ensure that it remained here.

Over the years, Amtmann considered various ways of setting up a corporation or a group of individuals for the purpose of buying items which might otherwise be lost to Canada. There was some support in both Eastern and Western Canada, but not enough to organize it in a formal way. One version was to function as The Hundred Associates, a good historical name, which would operate in the manner that Arthur Doughty's Hundred Associates had for the Public Archives in the 1920s. A few items were actually bought in this way with the auction house acting as agents and were subsequently resold to Canadian repositories.

Amtmann's view of Canadian heritage and the whole question of nationalism went beyond the traditional platitudes. He had seen enough of the raw nationalist spirit to turn him against such an emotion forever. He was proud to be a Canadian, a choice he had freely made; he felt it a privilege to be a citizen of a country with traditions of freedom and justice; he was annoyed by the divisions within the country and had little sympathy with extreme views of any stripe; and he was upset by what seemed to him to be indifference to a splendid heritage. Canadians were aimless as a people and not making the most of their vast potential. In his considered opinion archivists, librarians, and the appropriate departments of government should be providing leadership in cultural matters, but this leadership was lacking.

Amtmann had arrived in this country with little money and few prospects. By hard work and application, he had fashioned a niche for himself in a new society. He had become recognized as a specialist in Canadian historical material and a leader in the antiquarian book world. Obviously, it was to his material advantage that there be an increasing interest in books, manuscripts, and such, but those who knew him best were convinced that his devotion to the preservation of our heritage took precedence over pecuniary gain. He gave unstintingly of his time and money to promote the interests of the book trade, and as the trade gained respect, a good deal of its progress was owing to him.

One serious shortcoming was his lack of understanding of the problems of library administration. He never recognized the number of demands on library budgets, even in their palmiest days. Plan as a librarian might to add to the Rare Book Room and the Canadiana Collection, the pressure of numbers required that an increasing portion of the library budget be used for the books needed by undergraduates. Likewise, the number

and the cost of periodicals soared almost beyond belief.

Amtmann never fully appreciated the Canadian tradition of support for the Public Archives, support which engendered budgetary allocations for the acquisition of material. When an important item became available at high cost, he assumed that the money could and should be found, as indeed it often was. He could not accept that an important piece was not bought by the Public Archives for reasons other than ignorance or indifference.

What he saw was the institutions spending tens of thousands of dollars to purchase collections and papers of Canadian authors, spending hundreds of thousands to purchase the papers of an eminent British philosopher, and the National Gallery spending a million for the acquisition of a single painting. He favoured these expenditures, but asked, if these were worth the price, why were the letters of a Laurier or a Molson not also worthy of purchase? Politicians could find the money for glamorous expenditures but not for priceless, unique historical papers and artifacts.

When interest in the Riel Diary was slow to materialize, he saw Canadians as immature and puritanical, not yet aware that exceptional pieces required substantial outlay. The press often seemed to share his preference for the colourful and dramatic, rather than the factual and accurate. When the McLeod Diary was sold to the agent for an American institution, he was reported to have said, 'We lost our land [the Old Northwest stretching as far as the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers] to the States and now we have lost the manuscript that is the proof of that loss.'

His description of the Molson letters which were offered for sale in 1973 as having 'all the fascination of a Canadian Forsyte Saga' was colourful but the analogy false. The correspondence was between a husband and wife over fourteen years; the Forsyte Saga dealt with the complex family relationships over three generations. When neither the Molson Papers nor the Laurier love letters received adequate bids, he felt injured, insulted, and frustrated, and with good reason. A decade later they would have sold for two or three times the price.

Bernard put his thoughts in an open letter to Canadian

archivists, which appeared in *The Canadian Archivist* of May, 1974. It is a brilliant polemic and should be read in its entirety. Here we attempt a summary. Starting with 'some of my best friends are archivists and librarians', he went on to say that he found himself diametrically opposed to them on matters of principle and philosophy. He conceded that the difficulty probably arose from the fact that the prices he considered fair they considered exorbitant, and went right to the heart of the matter:

> The Canadian Establishment does not care for 'Vieux papiers souvent scandaleux', and displays a lack of knowledgeable cultural sensibilities. (When I sold the Jacobs papers, the Jewish community of Montreal was almost up in arms over the fact that private papers were offered on an auction block; when I sold the Riel diary I was threatened with injunctions and received menacing phone calls; the same when I offered the Laurier love letters.) I do not blame the federal or provincial governments for their seeming cultural indifference. Politicians are responsible to their electors and they might have difficulties in explaining to them that they paid money for old papers.

Amtmann then referred to the Laurier love affair with Madame Lavergne as dealt with by the historian Joseph Schull, and quoted from the editorial in the *Montreal Star* which echoed his views. He described the historian's function as establishing the facts and his as dealer to find a buyer. That no Canadian collector or institution would pay the necessary money reflected on all Canadians.

He expressed delight that McMaster University would spend a reported $520,000 for Bertrand Russell's papers and that the Canadian Government could find a million dollars for a European painting.

> But how irreverent of me to mention in the same breath a Riel diary which the government did not think worth more than $12,000, allowing it to fall to private interests, how absurd of me to mention 344 pages of intimate love

> letters of a French Canadian from Arthabaska for which the Government of Canada could not find even the slightest interest.

He made his point dramatically but unfairly. To say that the papers of a French Canadian from Arthabaska were not worth buying is, in today's fashionable phrase, a racist remark. Did he mean that the government would have thought the papers worth more had they been those of an English Canadian from Toronto? Or perhaps that those of an important European would have produced a different reaction? Nonetheless, Riel's diary should have been worth more than $12,000 to the nation and the Laurier letters more than $5,000.

He was on less sound ground with his contention that the normal manoeuvres of potential buyers to eliminate competitors create 'monopolistic situations ... [and] becomes collusion and is subject to legal investigation and pursuit.' As is evident from Dr. Smith's inability to buy the diary at the price he thought right, there were at least two bidders prepared to pay double the price acceptable to the Public Archives.

The essence of Amtmann's case was that archivists and librarians are custodians of the material, historians decide its merits and historical importance, but the determination 'of financial values ought to rest with the experts, specialist antiquarian dealers in books and manuscripts.' To a point, perhaps, but that does not account for the fact that some librarians and archivists also know prices. The idea that institutional buyers have to produce whatever price the dealer thinks appropriate for a given piece sounds fine from the dealers' point of view, but the world doesn't work that way. The one effective control that buyers have in a rising market is the refusal to buy, though they sometimes regret it later, for they know that they should have bought when they didn't or couldn't.

Amtmann finished with a rhapsodic flourish, and eloquent tribute to the splendid fellows the dealers: 'We are not custodians, nor are we keepers ... we sold our goods to princes and kings, to Bodleys and Pepys ... In our hand the material is alive. It becomes a treasured reality, not simply another number on an all but inaccessible shelf. And we sell it, imparting in some measure the fascination of our discovery and the beauty of our adventure. It is not yet dead, but it loses its life in the institutional embrace. But we remember the fragrance of what we have traded away.

A magnificent flight of fancy! Bernard Amtmann, in the spirit of Errol Flynn as Robin Hood versus the Sheriff of Nottingham, the progressive outlaw versus the reactionary establishment figure. He is arguing that the librarian or archivist should buy whatever the bookseller thinks he should buy and pay whatever the bookseller thinks the price should be, and that The Nation should find the money to pay for it. There are flaws in his argument, but he states it well:

> In my view librarians and archivists are by definition custodians of the material in their possession.... The determining of financial values ought to rest with the experts, specialist antiquarian dealers in books and manuscripts and with auctioneers. The historical appraisal of material must surely be the responsibility of historians. And the ultimate decision to purchase or not to purchase ... should be left with the executive branch of the department involved. Purchases of special material should not be made dependent on available funds; special funds should be made available for special purchases.

Thus the dealer finds the rare item, the historian judges its historical importance, the dealer prices it, and the archivist or librarian buys it and looks after it. He also puts a number on it, and places it on an all-but inaccessible shelf. If it is an item that commands an exceptional price, special funds must be found for it at the discretion of the appropriate department head or, in special cases, the Treasury Board. It has worked something like that for years. This should be qualified by adding that some archivists or librarians are history specialists themselves, and not everything to which a dealer assigns a high price will be thought worth it by those with the responsibility to buy.

The final decision whether or not to buy must rest with the institution. This has meant that ignorance, indifference and inertia can and have been responsible for wrong decisions camouflaged by a wall of institutional platitudes. If Amtmann argued wrongly that the custodians should always agree with the dealer, his criticisms were incisive and often valid. If some of his shafts went off into the clouds, some went to the bull's eye, and occasionally one went into an overstuffed derrière. He woke up a lot of people along the way.

V

BERNARD AMTMANN enjoyed the theatrical aspects of bookselling, a field that lends itself naturally to the pyrotechnical. He understood instinctively the marketing principle that it is not the steak that sells, it's the sizzle: to the extent that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, an exceptional piece prosaically described becomes as ordinary as its description.

On the other hand, an exceptional piece described in its literary and historical perspective becomes recognizable for what it is, exceptional, perhaps unique. With a sound, dramatic description, the collector treasures it the more, and will often include the dealer's description in the book when it resides on his shelf. The institutional buyer may not, of course, but then he also stamps books, pastes things in them, throws away dust jackets, and otherwise vandalizes them, much as Vandal is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as a "race that ravaged Gaul, Spain, N. Africa & Rome, destroying many books & works of art &c."

* * *

He had few friends and a limited social life. He liked to entertain and took his guests to the best restaurants. He disdained gossip and had little small talk. His political perspective was that of the social democrat. He discussed international affairs and domestic politics, and he enjoyed sports on television. An occasional quiet dinner and a game of bridge was about the extent of his social life. For all his militant views on matters of public controversy, and his own contributions towards it, he dealt with people in general with an Old World charm and courtesy.

His work was both occupation and vocation. His weekends would include long talks with friendly collectors, out-of-town bookdealers and visiting librarians. He was always discussing books, asking questions and checking material. Visitors who liked football as well as books could see both with Amtmann on an autumn afternoon. Coffee was always available, and sometimes a little Highland dew or a glass of sherry for those so inclined in the late afternoon.

After his mother's death in 1954, Bernard moved to a small flat on Crescent Street. He lived next in the Chateau Apartments, on Sherbrooke Street, just west of Peel, about the time a Quebec intellectual named Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was becoming well known across Canada, also had an apartment there. He subsequently moved across the street to the more fashionable Le Cartier, then to an apartment on McGregor Street, and later to the opulent Port Royal. After his marriage the family moved to a handsome house at 39 Thornhill Avenue, Westmount, where they lived for a few years before moving to an apartment in Westmount Square, his last residence.

He kept many of his reference books and much of his best stock at home. As he bought material the choice items were taken home to be worked on at his leisure. He slept less than most people and when he had recent acquisitions or new ideas to expand, he might be found working at home or office at any hour of the night. He was a workaholic, one of that species who find their work so interesting that they are not happy away from it.

When he bought a library there would always be a handful of titles that he had not seen before; they might or might not be in the Union Catalogue. The process would begin: TPL, Gagnon, Casey, Tremaine, Dionne, Sabin, Morgan, Peel, Watters, Wing, or whatever seemed appropriate. He would dive into the histories and the reference books, completely absorbed, talking to himself, drinking coffee, lighting cigarettes, mumbling pensively, the scientist fascinated by the bug.

Ammann had an instinct for the rare and important. "Everything is rare," he said one day, and from his perspective everything was important to the total picture. Pamphlets once common filled dealers' shelves and catalogues for years and then disappeared. A printed item abounds, becomes scarce, and then is never seen. His job was to recognize them and get them into the appropriate collections, to sell them to collectors and institutions. Those who would not act on his recommendations were failing in their responsibilities.

One of his delights was establishing historical significance, relating old material to the issues of the day and finding why it was important. Which libraries had it? Which did not? How many copies were there in the country? How many copies were there anywhere? Finding why an item was important was as much part of the chase as finding it in the first place.

Several of his employees became important dealers in their own right after working for him, among them Warren Baker, Alfred Van Peteghem, and David Ewens. They learned by osmosis, by being there, seeing him in action and listening to him, not by any conscious master-apprentice relationship. He was a kind and generous employer although he could be scathing in his criticism. His staff's main complaint was that he would not let them work on the better material. This, not surprisingly, he kept for himself, and left his staff to the basic business housekeeping: typing the invoices, wrapping and mailing the books, sweeping the floor, making the interminable pots of coffee, and going out for his newspaper and his ever-present cigarettes.

Ammann delighted in playing little jokes, in testing the gullibility of people. His friends sometimes wondered how many of his quixotic jousts were motivated by principle and how many by a delight in the absurd. His Spartan intellect was tempered by humour, by a sense of mischief. If his customers rejected a book at $500 in his catalogue as too expensive, he would rewrite the description and offer it again at a higher price, and often not only sell it but get a second order, both from buyers who had originally rejected it on grounds of price. In the same vein he agreed to the following prank at one of the auctions.

Mr. A, a regular, had the disconcerting habit of coming in with a bid below the opening bid if that bid drew no response. The house was not against this in all cases; sometimes when an opening price drew no response Nicholas Fick, the auctioneer, would lower it himself and start again, and the price would take off as the bidding progressed. On the other hand, if Mr. A's low bidding was permitted on a regular basis, no opening bid would be taken seriously.

So one day Mr. B, another regular, and Fick arranged to have a little fun. When there was no response to an opening bid and a lower bid was called out by A, a still lower bid was shouted by B. 'Sold', announced Fick, bringing down the hammer and indicating B, to the consternation of A and the confusion of the audience. The bidding proceeded to the next number while B offered to make a deal with A on the item in question. Amtmann watched the drama unfold with his eyes twinkling.

A more important incident illustrates the nature of the man and the peculiarity of the trade. A religious institution in Montreal decided to dispense with its library. They threw out half their books and the following year were about to throw out the rest when the bishop decided to call Amtmann. 'I'll give you a thousand dollars for the books sight unseen,' said Bernard. More than two hundred cartons were delivered to his office rather than the city dump, and the cheque changed hands. Putting to one side anything that seemed remotely of interest, Bernard filled six cartons out of the more than two hundred.

Of the half dozen exceptional volumes one little book turned out to be the first edition of the first book printed in Montreal, the *Règlement de la Confrérie* ... referred to earlier. Only three other copies of this book were known. It sold at the first sale of Montreal Book Auctions, Ltd., for $2,500.

A couple of weeks after the cartons were delivered (and a year before the auction sale), another cleric called. Apparently unaware that so many books had been thrown out the previous year, he was outspoken in his condemnation of Amtmann for the low price he had paid. Bernard offered to return almost all the books and they could keep the cheque. The offer was accepted, the second cleric felt he had scored a victory, and the question for Amtmann of what to do with the remaining books was neatly disposed of. Honour was saved all around and everybody was satisfied. Most important, one of the most significant of Canadian books was recognized for what it was, and took its place of honour in the Rare Book Room of McGill University.

Amtmann had a flare for public relations, with individuals as well as with the media, and he was always available to the press. He was an elegant figure with a colourful history, had distinguished white hair and, on appropriate occasion, wore a pinstripe suit. He always had a quotable remark or analogy, even if clearly rhetorical. A bookseller of my type is like a fine vintage: he improves with age.

* * *

In the autumn of 1972, at age sixty-five, Bernard Amtmann surprised his family and friends with the announcement that he intended to marry. His fiancée was Airdrie Wilson, a Montrealer who had married young and moved to Toronto. In 1970, she had divorced, and returned to Montreal with her son Beckett. Airdrie was a talented illustrator whose work was subsequently published, but after her return to Montreal she joined Montreal Book Auctions.

Amtmann had wanted John Archer as best man, but with typical impetuosity set the wedding date without speaking to Archer, only to learn afterward that he would be unable to attend because of a previous, unavoidable commitment. Bernard then arranged that his brother Willy stand with him. Early on the day of the wedding, Bernard had tried to reach Willy in Ottawa, but got no answer. He was sure Willy was on his way to Montreal, but just in case he asked John Mappin to stand by in case of emergency.

The couple were married at the Presbyterian Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. Bernard followed the proceedings with the greatest of interest, happily accepting the name MacAmtmann for the occasion, as suggested by a friend of Scottish descent.

He readily adapted to the major changes in his life required by marriage and step-fatherhood at sixty-five. He continued to be at work before most people were out of bed and he spent evenings at home with his family. He took the first winter holidays of his life, enjoying the warmth and sunshine of the West Indies, thereby softening the impact of the Montreal winters. He was proud of Airdrie's artistic talent and gave her every encouragement. She was working on an illustrated children's book which was subsequently published in New York.* But it

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The Stars in the Sky: A Scottish Tale Retold by Joseph Jacobs. Pictures by Airdrie Amtmann. (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979.)

was his relationship with Beckett that attracted the notice of visitors to the Ammann home.

Beckett was six years old when his mother remarried. He was a bright, sensitive child, but he had lacked the guidance of a father's affection and authority. There was every opportunity for a clash of wills and a strained relationship. This did not develop, due in the main to Bernard's tact and strength. He enjoyed Beckett's youthful enthusiasms and he led his talents along constructive lines. Shortly after the marriage Beckett assumed his name, and Bernard gave him a desk at his office, with the nameplate "Beckett Ammann, Vice-President." Bernard's private life in the early years after his marriage was warm and happy, for he felt he was needed and cherished. His affection for Beckett was deep and lasting and he could dream of developing a young mind to accomplish goals that had eluded him. This private world was a haven offering some refuge from his very real troubles in the business world.

* * *

When Bernard broke with Christie's after the auction of September, 1970, it was financially the most critical period of his career. He had arrived in Canada in 1947 at forty years of age, in the prime of his life, and buoyed with the prospects of a new career in a new land. When he split with Christie's he was in his sixties, with heavy responsibilities and burdened with debt. In addition to two active businesses he had family responsibilities. The years were passing and his dreams of a multifaceted success had been shattered.

The book auction business seemed to offer the fastest way back to financial stability and Montreal Book Auctions resumed its sales in December, 1970. His staff was competent and experienced, and Nicholas Fick an able auctioneer. But the auction business to be profitable must have substantial working capital and offer rare and unusual items. Nothing discourages owners from putting up rare material so much as a reputation for delays in payment. It was important to be able to buy fine material from the trade as well as to pay promptly for those sold from consignment. Owners of material sold expected payment

within thirty days of the sale but buyers commonly took sixty and more days to pay, the catalogue's stated conditions of immediate payment notwithstanding.

After each auction there was an anxious period of trying to balance payables and receivables, of getting prompt payment from buyers to satisfy the most persistent of his creditors, as well as to pay salaries, the rent, and the other operating expenses. There was little time and less money to be spent on Bernard Amtmann Inc., the original book business. Its sales declined steadily. Laurie Hill Books had ceased operation.

Bernard Amtmann Inc. no longer attracted an appreciable walk-in trade, as the stock was depleted and not refreshed by new purchases. New material now went to the auction house. Hans kept the business going, filled mail orders, and worked on other projects as they arose. As the stock deteriorated, there were fewer catalogues and those few were less interesting. Amtmann's old customers regretted the passing of the retail business but he could do nothing about it. He had neither the time nor the energy to revitalize his retail business until he had paid off his debts.

With remarkable tenacity he kept the auction business going while he held off creditors, paying the most persistent and promising eventual payment to the others. He sold his business archives to the University of Montreal in 1972-73 and his bibliographical records to the National Library in 1976. A further influx of cash came when he sold his house on Thornhill Avenue for almost twice what he paid for it a few years earlier. Appraisals continued to be a substantial source of income. He offered shares in the company to a friend who had made him a loan, and in 1974 managed to pay off his major debts.

In early 1974 there came a request from the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan that he accept an honorary Doctorate of Laws. His feigned indifference could not mask the delight with which he accepted the honour. Bernard and Andrée went to Regina for the convocation on May 24, 1974. He was presented by his old friend, Dr. John H. Archer, Principal of the Regina Campus. The degree was conferred by the Prime Minister of Canada and Chancellor of the University, the Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker.

To be accepted by the academic community in this manner was a splendid experience for one who had been unable to attend high school. There was a wine-and-cheese reception in his honour at the Principal's residence, where he was greeted by the Premier of Saskatchewan and other luminaries of the university and the province. He was an honoured guest at the Alumni Ball that evening.

The University of Saskatchewan, in conferring this honour, recognized Amtmann's devotion to his adopted country. It acknowledged his indomitable will to find and record the printed and written sources of our national literature. Amtmann appreciated the honour conferred on him and he accepted it with grace and humility.

VI

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1974, the Canadian government announced its intention to enact legislation to prevent the export of books, manuscripts, and works of art of major cultural importance. By the terms of the proposed act, any such item sold in Canada for more than a specified price, originally $1,000, would have to be cleared by a board of experts before an export licence would be issued.

The principle was sound, and the resulting Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board provided the means to achieve the intended purpose. The details evolved from the first proposals and are complex, and an explanation will not be attempted here, but Amtmann opposed the idea from the start, although it presented him with a dilemma. On one hand, the government should protect and encourage the development of Canadian culture; on the other hand, too much government involvement might cross the line between a respectable preservation of national traditions and a chauvinist devotion to indigenous works.

Amtmann was concerned that the resulting government involvement in the sale of books and manuscripts would hamper the flow of material into Canada and discourage purchases by Canadians abroad. The results have shown his fears to be unfounded. The board has functioned well, either helping to find appropriate repositories in Canada for both Canadian and non-Canadian works, or recommending the issuance of an export licence. In those cases where a buyer willing and able to pay a reasonable price could not be found for an important item, the government made available the funds so that the item would remain in Canada.

Amtmann's views were expressed in an article in the July 22, 1975, issue of the *Antiquarian Bookman*, and provoked an enthusiastic letter of support from Mary Benjamin, a leading American autograph dealer. In particular, Miss Benjamin upheld his view that historians, librarians, and archivists were the appropriate authorities to decide on the historical signi-

ficance of material and how it might best be conserved, but that the determination of financial values should rest with the specialist antiquarian dealers in the various fields.

Members of the Cultural Review Board were appointed by the Secretary of State, and Ian Clark of that department held lengthy consultations with experts in the areas affected. The administration of the law was modified by recommendations of the professionals, and the Antiquarian Bookdealers' Association of Canada was given representation on the Board. The Act has worked well. Fewer national treasures are destroyed as houses are cleaned out. The Act has increased interest and encouraged donations. More old diaries and old books than ever are being brought to dealers for evaluation.

In one sense, from the dealers' perspective, it has worked too well. The trade would like to buy much that is donated, but the rich have found that they can often make more money by giving than by selling; that is, the receipt they get for a cultural property saves them more in income tax than the cash they would have received in a sale to the trade. In addition, prestige will often result from an important gift, and many a beaming so-called donor basks in the publicity accompanying his so-called gift, while saving tens of thousands of tax dollars by virtue of his so-called charitable donation.

* * *

In his last decade, Amtmann's interest in bibliography resulted in the bulk of his publications. His major work was published in 1971–73, a four-volume *Contributions to a Short Title Catalogue of Canadiana*. It listed the titles he had catalogued over a quarter of a century and contained some 30,000 entries. It was modelled on the British *Short Title Catalogue*, with the addition of prices, to indicate the direction of the market through the years. It was a major contribution, with more than 10,000 titles not recorded elsewhere.

His other work in the field included his *Contributions to a Dictionary of Canadian Pseudonyms and Anonymous Works Relating to Canada*, *Early Canadian Children's Books, 1763–1840*, *Canadian Children's Books, 1841–1867*, *Montreal Book*

Auction Records for the years 1967-1978, subsequently continued by Craig Fraser for the years of Canada Book Auctions 1979-1982, but omitting the last sale of March, 1983. He had started others before he became ill in 1978. (See Appendix 1 for a list of his publications.)

Ammann had no formal training or experience in bibliography. What he did have, and it served him well, was his boundless energy and enthusiasm. He broke new ground in several directions, but his efforts were amateurish. His *Short-Title Catalogue* was important. His works on pseudonyms and children's books were useful contributions but no more. Michel Thériault reviewed the two children's books for *Phaedrus*, vol. 7, no. 2/3, Winter 1980, p. 33. He made the best of it, as he did not want to appear critical of a deceased friend, but he pointed out several shortcomings, and asked a question which he then answered:

> How many specialists in children's literature did Bernard consult? I know from having discussed it with him that he avoided most of them and argued with the others. Bernard was a maverick and somewhat of an 'agent provocateur'; most people were afraid of him, a few of us loved him for it. But he was not always right ... In the case of these bibliographies he made a mistake.

Thériault pointed out that he confused books for children with books for young people, and that he did not adequately define his objective. He regretted that Ammann did not concentrate on the fields he knew best, but added that there were titles included which were not found elsewhere and that his work would be helpful in the preparation of a better bibliography in the future.

One of Ammann's ambitions was to participate in a national bibliography of Canadiana, even to be in charge of it. In the mid-1970s the national bibliography was constantly on his mind. He considered it the obvious monument for the centennial of Confederation. He was aware that the National Library was planning retrospective bibliographies going back to 1534, the year the Cartier's voyage up the St. Lawrence.

He knew that one major problem would be the bibliographers' obsession with perfection which led many of them to believe that if a bibliography was not complete it was worthless, and his hope was to compensate for this worthy if impossible ideal with a plan which was simplicity itself. He would start with a listing of 200,000 titles, to be published in six volumes, folio. The basic six-volume set would be supplemented by additional annual publications. The point of departure would be what was now available for listing. Gaps would be filled as additional information became available. In a couple of decades we would have a comprehensive inventory of our books, pamphlets and printed ephemera.

Ammann was aware that it would be difficult for the National Library to accept his ideas, indeed to have him involved with the project in any capacity. Such an undertaking fell within the responsibility of the National Library as set out by statute. Dr. Guy Sylvestre, the National Librarian, tactfully did not dismiss his idea out of hand. There was a sympathetic exchange of views, but the National Library had the mandate and was carrying it out as thoroughly and forthrightly as time and funds permitted.

If Ammann's project was to go forward it must do so outside the National Library and on its own resources. He approached several foundations and received many expressions of support but not the financial backing he required. He was disappointed but not discouraged; he felt he had made a sound proposal and had been taken seriously. The opportunity would arise again.

Ammann enjoyed much of the process of revitalization going on in Quebec. He supported the liberation of the spirit that fired the Quiet Revolution. He sympathized with and encouraged the young artists and writers who poured out their hearts and souls in expressions of life and energy. He could not condone the excesses that all rapid changes engender, but the youthful enthusiasm of the times found a match in his own.

He did not approve of the removal of literary manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale to the Archives nationales, as was done by the Quebec Government, thus precipitating the resignation of the head of the Library. Ammann wrote a letter in his support and critical of the government which appeared in the *Montreal Star*, February 3, 1973.

His last public brawl occurred in 1977, and included many of the recurring themes that had enlivened his years in the auction business. He was offered the letters and personal papers of Sir James Robert Gowan, an Irishman who had come to Canada in 1832, and he settled in Upper Canada on land which was to become Peel County. Gowan was a prominent Orangeman, sat for forty years on the Bench of Ontario, and was one of the commissioners appointed in 1873 to investigate the Pacific Scandal. In the later years of a long career he was a member of the Canadian Senate.

His papers included some 2,500 letters, many from prominent people, including eighty-one by Sir John A. Macdonald. These provoked considerable publicity and were featured in three auction catalogues in the first half of 1977, inviting bids and expressions of interest from institutions and private collectors. The one firm offer came from the Ontario Archives for $25,000, one tenth of Amtmann's appraisal, and was rejected with the disdain he thought it merited.

It also inspired Amtmann's quintessential polemic, which he had printed in a small edition of about 200 copies, without a limitation statement, and handed out to a select group of recipients at the Toronto Book Fair in May, 1977. It also appeared in full in the catalogue for the next auction, no. 102, June 29, 1977. The pamphlet is the most dramatic of his publications and one of two that are already scarce. It is entitled *A Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity*. He saw the problem as part of the recurring pattern:

> We re-encounter the strange and remarkably familiar phenomena of an almost complete absence of interest among institutions, universities, collectors and the general public. . . . Historical collections of the magnitude of the Gowan Papers are to be considered distinctive national treasures and private collectors and institutions feel that they belong in national institutions of an archival character, either provincial or federal. But national archival institutions are faced with the dilemma that they already

> have too much of the same type of material, and that their budgets are very much restricted. For this reason the financial evaluation of the professional archivist differs greatly from that of the professional dealer or auctioneer. If it may be assumed that manuscripts and letters have ideological as well as research value, overly under the influence of the academic, the archivist is mainly concerned with the research value, and his conception of the financial value is coloured by the consideration of how much the material will contribute to research.

A curious blend of dialectic, syllogistic logic, and debating technique make up the argument, which is further distended by his special verbosity. What is clearly wrong is his remark that there is an absence of interest. Many institutions and many collectors would be delighted to have them. But not for $250 000.

As Ammann goes on to say, putting it in other words, if the Public Archives already have several thousand letters by Sir John A. Macdonald, and large quantities of letters by the other prominent correspondents of Sir James Gowan, these are not worth a lot of money to them. Except for the occasional letter of special importance, the unit value of his lot is much less to the Public Archives than to an individual collector. And for a collector to consider spending such an amount he must consider how else the amount might be spent and he will probably come to the conclusion that it could be better spent elsewhere. The problem is not a lack of interest. The problem is $250 000.

Ammann went on to note that there was an active market for fine old houses, furniture and antiques, paintings, medals, Eskimo sculptures, and such. There was also a strong market for the papers of Canadian poets, for the papers of Bertrand Russell, and generous support for the Disraeli Project at Queen's University. Why not similar funds for letters by Sir John A. Macdonald? He favoured the acquisition of old masters by the National Gallery, of all material that would enrich the cultural and intellectual life of the nation. Why, then, was money not forthcoming for the Gowan Papers which were clearly national treasures? Laws prohibiting export do not encourage people to give them to libraries and archives.

Indeed, he argued, no satisfactory mechanism exists to encourage such donations. Many archivists and librarians feel that public spirited citizens have a responsibility to donate such treasures. Others will pay high prices for some acquisitions, while still others deplore both high prices and important material leaving the country. Few will make any effort to ensure that collections offered for sale receive a fair market value.

The government gives the National Gallery a reasonably free hand because there is an established art market to determine fair value. At this time in Canada, there was neither a sufficient market nor experience in the market to establish a fair price for the Gowan Papers. Amtmann understood this but found it unsatisfactory. He had his own answer. He argued that he had attempted to foster a sense of pride in the Canadian heritage by his "Open Letter to Canadian Archivists", by representing the Antiquarian Booksellers Association in discussions with officials from the Department of the Secretary of State on the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, and by participating in the orientation seminar arranged by the National Archival Appraisal Board. While this last was particularly useful for mutual understanding between the trade and the institutions, it provided no criteria which might be useful in establishing a fair market value:

> In the case of the Gowan Papers no market exists and therefore it is not possible to establish a fair market value. Nobody will deny that the Gowan Papers have value in the context of Canadian heritage. No one will suggest that the owner discard the material. No one will suggest that due to the absence of a market the owner has to accept any price offered. ... If the owner wishes to discard and to destroy the material, this is his decision; if he desires to sell it, this is his right and he has the right to expect a fair price.
>
> It is my business to evaluate and estimate books, pamphlets, manuscripts and letters, and it is my considered opinion that $250 000 is a fair and realistic appraisal. ... It does not take into consideration that every single item is unique, that many of the items have special importance

> and that the sum total of all this is a splendid manifestation of real national heritage for Canada and Canadians. . . . The fact that no Canadian market for the Gowan Papers exists [at his price] . . . proves very clearly that Canadians are essentially uninterested in the history of their country, and are singularly endowed with apathetic feelings of national pride. . . . As long as materials of the nature of the Gowan Papers are not appreciated and are neglected by Canadians the search for a Canadian identity will go on. It is not the governments and the institutions that are to blame, it is the Canadian intelligentsia which is at fault. It is not what is called the Canadian Establishment, the bankers, the brewers, the merchants, the rich and the powerful, who are at fault, but another establishment, more powerful and more insidious that has created this situation. Indeed, it is the ongoing conspiracy of the Canadian academic establishment that has retarded and delayed the discovery of the Canadian identity. The banker, the brewer, the lumber merchant can do much, but they cannot give the country a soul and an identity. The journalist, the poet, the writer, the professor, the librarian, the archivist can. . . . We need to build shrines for the men who made this country. . . . The sorry spectacle that no serious offer is forthcoming, that no market exists for a collection like the Gowan Papers, will one day be a thing of the past. In rejecting 2 500 letters written by Sir John A. Macdonald and his contemporaries, we reject our heritage and we reject our identity.

This is dialectic carried to the point of sophistry extended to the point of absurdity. He is restating, with pyrotechnical eloquence, his old contention that unless people pay what he thinks they should pay for one item of the enormous number that comprise Canadian cultural history, they have no interest in their history. This is simply not so. Also, he widened his target to include the academics, and he would probably find some support for this among the more nationalist of them. Others might argue that there is a Canadian identity, and that it is well known to the citizens of Moose Jaw, Trois Pistoles, and Orangeville.

The sad thing is that the academics and the journalists have not yet discovered it, for it doesn't sit well with their preconceptions.

How much of his extravagant argument is deliberate exaggeration to make his point, and how much of it results from his being carried away by the joy of battle, is hard to say, but he tended to get people thinking constructively if only in self-defence. He continued the argument with declining intensity through the summer and into the autumn, in conversation, by correspondence, and in the auction catalogues. There he let the matter rest. For the next year he appeared wholly taken up with preparing and administering the auctions. He spent more time at home with his family. He was approaching his last months.

He was living off his reserves of energy. In 1978 he confided to a friend that he had a heart murmur and was supposed to cut down on cigarettes. Towards the end of 1978 he was struck down by a heart attack. He lingered for some days, appeared to rally, but then gradually weakened. He died in the Montreal General Hospital on January 9, 1979.

* * *

Bernard Amtmann would have been pleased and perhaps a little surprised at the warmth of the tributes which poured in after his death. Collectors, librarians, archivists, and bookmen in general, from Canada, the United States, and Britain expressed their regret at his passing, and gratitude for his contribution to the vitality of their world. Leading professional journals and general periodicals equally paid tribute. He had a remarkable talent for retaining the friendship and respect of many with whom he had continuing disagreements.

He arrived in this country in 1947 to begin a new life, knowing few people and with few assets and almost no money. At his death, thirty-two years later, he was considered by many to have had no peer as an authority on Canadiana.

He was in the antiquarian book business in Canada for all of these thirty-two years, selling books, pamphlets, maps, manuscripts, and printed ephemera. For the first twenty years he operated a regular retail business, and then opened an auction

house which increasingly became his main base. He was largely self-educated and had a devotion to scholarship that earned him respect throughout the trade, the libraries, and the universities. He encouraged the bookdealers to work in their joint interest towards common goals. The young members of the ABAC in particular remember the help and encouragement he provided in their early years in the trade. He was quick to protest government interference in fields he thought better left to individuals. He repeatedly warned of the growing presence of Big Brother in the affairs of ordinary people.

Bernard had a deep feeling of gratitude toward his adopted country. He delighted in its lack of conformity and its open society. His polemics concerning the search for identity were genuine, and, if he never fully understood the Canadian ethos, he understood it as well as the native-born who have argued the subject for more than a century.

Bernard Amtmann came from a culture that had been developing for hundreds of years. He came to a culture that still reflected the physical task of subduing a wilderness. He assumed the role of a gadfly, perhaps too easily, seeming to create controversy for its own sake. If his self-appointed role of making Canadians more aware of their history and its artifacts was repetitive and simplistic, it was genuine and it went a long way toward achieving its purpose. He brought a new awareness to the field and a new respectability to dealing in it.

Away from business he was a very private person. His brother and sister remember him as a young man on social occasions being charming but reserved. He was strong-willed, enterprising, and creative, sure of his ability to compete and win. He was a delightful host and a gentle parent. He gained the respect of his adopted son Beckett and was at once parent, companion, mentor, and friend to the boy.

Bernard Amtmann is remembered with respect and affection. At the Annual Meeting of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada in Toronto on May 14, 1979, the following resolution was adopted: 'That A.B.A.C. sponsor an Amtmann Circle to commemorate the memory of our founding president, Bernard Amtmann.' Membership in the Circle was open to all who shared his objectives and aspirations. The object

of the Circle was to commemorate Bernard Amtmann's name by sponsoring scholarly projects in his fields of interest: bibliography, Canadian history, bookselling, and book collecting. The Steering Committee suggested as an early project the production of a short biography and an outline of his work.

This brief memoir is intended to serve that purpose: a not uncritical tribute to a notable bookseller, a devoted scholar, and a respected friend.

Epilogue

IN JUNE 1984 John Archer gave an informal talk to the Amtmann Circle meeting in Massey College in the University of Toronto. It was appropriate for him to speak; he had been closer to Bernard Amtmann than any other man since Bernard arrived in Canada.

Archer ascribed Amtmann's great strength as a dealer to his all-embracing view of Canadiana, his emphasis on the importance of ephemera, the railway manuals, schedules of canal barges, flyers for sports days, sermons, menus and university lectures, all of which found a place in his catalogues. He thought Amtmann's greatest accomplishment was his *Short-Title Catalogue*, which listed many thousands of titles not recorded elsewhere.

Perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Amtmann, Dr Archer continued, was being asked by the Library of Congress in Washington to be their agent in building such a collection, but he declined, not wanting to be responsible for shipping so much unique material out of the country. He had hoped that one day the Public Archives of Canada might ask him to collect for them.

Amtmann's first contact with Canadians had been during the war. He had been impressed by the Canadian troops he encountered, and he and Archer had shared the special common ground of both having been members of commando units and surviving the rigours of hand-to-hand combat. He thought Canada the finest country in the world, and was surprised in due course to learn how few Canadians realized it.

His own nature was European rather than British, and he thought France led the world in the finer things of life. He respected the German contribution to literature and music, and the British tradition of fair play and sound laws, the ultimate freedom being from the heavy hand of government.

Amtmann never understood the English establishment in Canada, and the failure of many English Canadians to take advantage of and profit from the French fact. He sympathized

with those fostering the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, who along with the leaders of the Prairie Provinces struggled against the corporate interests of Eastern Canada.

He dubbed the archivists the undertakers of Canadian culture. The Public Archives came in for special criticism, in spite of having earned a distinguished reputation as one of the foremost public archival institutions in North America, in spite of not having special funds for acquisitions, and in spite of a Canadian tradition of donations to Canadian archives. The Public Archives were a continuing target of this newly-arrived apostle of Canadian culture.

Archer found Ammann's thesis somewhat undermined by public knowledge that criticism of those who did not buy at his auctions and who criticized his pricing, was criticism of those who did not do as much business with him as he would have wished. He added that librarians are traditionally buyers from catalogues more than at auctions, perhaps inevitable in a country as vast as Canada. By 1970, Ammann had almost deserted the second hand book catalogue field in favour of auctions. "What was surprising in all this is that Bernard remained friends with many of the archivists in spite of his criticisms, and certainly the National Library never broke off relations." Archer concluded with an interesting analogy:

> I have often thought that Bernard's bridge game was a microcosm of his day-to-day exchanges. He had intuitive card sense but ignored the conventions. If a hand pleased him he would bid up to the limit and beyond. If he wasn't happy with his hand he would pass in the face of a demand bid. He was an egotist and sometimes brilliant; he was no follower, no patient plowman, but a flashing meteor. And he usually lost! And he was a gracious loser once the game was over.

* * *

Again, this is not biography but personal recollections supported by a few facts. There is much we do not know about Bernard Ammann and a few things we have omitted because we thought Bernard would have preferred them to be left out

In this vein we have avoided the story of the thief who stole two books from an important library He sold them to Amtmann who returned them to the library with his compliments before the loss had been discovered In another instance, he put a leading Canadian writer in contact with an institutional buyer of literary manuscripts and sued when he was not paid what he considered an adequate fee for the resulting sale Another institution still has not paid his bill for a valuation which they thought too high. In both cases he refused to reduce his fee and was paid nothing.

Appendix A

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE LIFE OF BERNARD AMTMANN

1907 Born July 11, in Vienna, Austria.

1913 Started School, attended for eight years, leaving at 14.

1914-18 First World War, which ended with Austria among the defeated nations.

1919-20 Amtmann children among those sent abroad to escape the near-starvation conditions of post-war Vienna.

1921 End of formal education. BA's first job, as a bank messenger.

1920s Various clerical jobs.

1930s In the early 30s, various business ventures with indifferent success. In later 30s, became established in photographic business.

1934 New Austrian constitution, modelled on the German. Chancellor Dollfuss shot by Nazi Stormtroopers.

1938 Germans occupy Austria. BA leaves, goes to France and joins army.

1939 Outbreak of Second World War.

1940 Germans conquer Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France. BA and his parents settle at Montauban in unoccupied France; he works at menial jobs, as a labourer, gardener, laundryman, dishwasher, hotel waiter, and others. He joins the French underground, becomes head of a commando unit engaged in sabotage.

1944 After Allied invasion of Europe and the liberation of France, BA returns to the French Army with the rank of sergeant.

1945 Germany surrendered in May and Japan in August. The next two years BA again works at odd jobs, but now buys and sells books as well.

1947 In October, BA and his mother arrive in Ottawa as landed immigrants. Within days he is buying and selling books.

1948 He issues his first catalogue, the first of sixteen issued in his three years in Ottawa.

1950 BA and his mother move to Montreal in early November.

1951 He opens a shop on Greene Avenue, Westmount, in May. A decade of developing the business and making a reputation.

1954 BA becomes a Canadian citizen.

1960 BA incorporates as Bernard Amtmann Inc. He also establishes Laurie Hill Ltd.

1966 Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada is organized with Bernard Amtmann as first president. At the annual meeting of the Canadian Library Association in Calgary, BA presents his plan for compiling and publishing a Canadian National Bibliography.

1967 BA establishes Montreal Book Auctions, with the first sale at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal, April 26, 1967.

1968 Arranges a joint venture with Christie, Manson & Woods of London, England; sales run from April 1969 to September 1970. Montreal Book Auctions resume sales in December 1970.

1971 Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

1971–73 The publication of BA's *Short Title Catalogue*, with some 30,000 titles, including 10,000 not recorded elsewhere.

1972 Marries Airdrie Wilson of Montreal.

1972–73 Sale of the Bernard Amtmann Inc.'s business records to the University of Montreal.

1974 Awarded the degree of Honorary Doctor of Laws by the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan.

1976 Sale of his bibliographical archives to the National Library.

1977 The Gowan Papers episode.

1978–79 Bernard Amtmann's last year and final illness, ending with his death January 9, 1979.

Appendix B

LIST OF BERNARD AMTMANN'S PUBLICATIONS AS AUTHOR, COMPILER OR PUBLISHER

Bibliography of Canadian Children's Books and Books for Young People 1841-1867. Livres de l'enfance & livres de la jeunesse du Canada 1841-1867. Montreal, 1977.

Canadian Art Auction Record, [Vol. I] 1969. Compiled by H. C. Campbell, Chief Librarian, Toronto Public Libraries. Willowdale, Ont.: Canadian Antiques and Fine Arts, [1970]. Volumes I and II were published by this company in Willowdale and Toronto, respectively; volumes III to VI were published in Montreal by Bernard Amtmann, Inc.

[do.] [Vol. II] 1970. Toronto, [1971].

[do.] Vol. III 1971. Montreal: Bernard Amtmann, Inc., 1973.

[do.] Vol. IV 1972. Montreal, 1973.

[do.] Vol. V 1973. Montreal, 1974.

[do.] Vol. VI, 1974. Montreal, 1975.

Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity. Montreal, 1977. 12p. About 200 copies printed, without limitation statement. Plum blue wrapper, tied with a gold cord. Reprinted in Montreal Book Auctions catalogue 102, June, 1977.

Contributions to a Dictionary of Canadian Pseudonyms and Anonymous Works relating to Canada. Contributions à un dictionnaire des pseudonymes canadiens et des ouvrages anonymes relatifs au Canada. Montreal, 1973.

Contributions to a Short-Title Catalogue of Canadiana. Mont-

real 1971–73. 4 vols, or 5 vols. interleaved. Bound in maroon buckram.

Early Canadian Children's Books 1763–1840. A bibliographical investigation into the nature and extent of early Canadian children's books and books for young people. Livres de l'enfance & livres de la jeunesse au Canada, 1763–1840. Étude bibliographique. Montreal, 1976. Illustrated, title pages reproduced.

Montreal Book Auction Records 1967–1971. Montreal, 1972.

[do.] Vol. II, 1972. Montreal, 1973.

[do.] Vol. III, 1973–1974. Montreal, 1976.

[do.] Vol. IV, 1975–76. Montreal, 1978.

[do.] Vol. V, 1977–1978. Montreal, 1979. Volumes VI to VIII were published by the successor firm, Canada Book Auctions, bringing the auction records up to 1981. Volume VII is cumulative for the years 1967–1980, and volume VIII records 1981–82. It omits the sale of March, 1983.

Montreal Book Auctions. L'Encan des livres de Montréal. Some highlights of the season 1970–71. Quelques prix remarquables. Montreal, 1971. [8]p. Promotional pamphlet for the coming season, with subscription form slipped in.

The North West Passage. A poem by George Stovin Venables. Ottawa, 1950. 12p. Card cover in one of two colours, off-white or pale blue. Facsimile reprint of the poem which won the Chancellor's Medal at Cambridge University in 1831. An edition of 100 copies.

Riel Diary [prospectus]. Montreal, 1971. [8]p.

Abacus. Published in Montreal, fourteen numbers appeared irregularly from July, 1967, to late 1970 or 1971. Written by

Ammann to continue discussions raised at meetings of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada, the first four letters being an acronym. He was assisted by William Morley and others.

Canadian Notes & Queries / *Questions et réponses canadiennes* first appeared as a supplement to *Abacus* in September 1969, and has continued more or less regularly to the present day, number 36 appearing in the fall of 1986. Ammann published the first [illegible] issues to June 1974, after which it was financed by other dealers, notably Alfred Van Peteghem of Montreal, and John Wray of Alliston, Ontario. Most of the editorial work has been done over the years by William Morley, with the assistance of associate editors, most recently Michel Theriault and Barbara Teatero.

Erasmus Circle Bulletin of Montreal. *Le Cercle Erasme de Montréal*. Three numbers were published, the first in November 1970, and two in 1971.

Bernard Ammann Inc. and Montreal Book Auctions issued approximately four hundred lists and catalogues from 1948 to 1979. Ammann often wrote long notes in his catalogues on bibliographical and other subjects. For example, three of his first four catalogues, nos. 2, 3, and 4, issued from Ottawa in [illegible], include a lengthy entry on his first Canadian object of scrutiny, the French soldier and administrator La Potherie. His letters to the editor appeared in several newspapers and journals.

The Bernard Ammann papers in the Literary Manuscripts Collection of the National Library of Canada, in particular Unit II, "Bibliographer, Publisher and Publicist", include notes towards several bibliographies which he did not complete, and a series called "Projects, Schemes and Controversies", which together show the extent of his thoughts and the variety of his interests.

We conclude this list with Willy Ammann's book on the history of music in Canada. It is here because of Bernard's

significant albeit small role, and also because of the book's intrinsic importance.

Amtmann, Willy. *Music in Canada 1600–1800.* Montreal: Habitex Books, 1975. 320p. Published in an edition of about 600 copies.

[do.] *La musique au Québec 1600–1875.* Traduction de Michelle Pharand. Montreal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1976. 420p. Illustrated by eight coloured plates and eighty illustrations in black and white. The French edition adds a hundred pages and extensive illustrations, and includes a section on music in Quebec in the nineteenth century. It was published in an edition of just over 6 000 copies. Both editions are now scarce.

Willy Amtmann received his degree of Bachelor of Music from the University of Toronto, Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York, and his Doctorate in Musicology from the University of Strasbourg, France. He taught at Carleton University in Ottawa from 1968 until his retirement in 1976; his courses included the first in the history of music in Canada given at a Canadian university.

Appendix C

MONTREAL BOOK AUCTIONS / CANADA BOOK AUCTIONS

The company known variously as Montreal Book Auctions / Christie's (Canada) with Montreal Book Auctions / Canada Book Auctions, held 149 sales [really 151 sales, as is shown below] from April, 1967, to March, 1983, as follows:

Montreal Book Auctions: sales 1 to 6, April, 1967, to November, 1968.

Christie's (Canada) with Montreal Book Auctions held sales from April, 1969, to September, 1970. The numbering is muddled by the fact that there are fewer sales than catalogues and also by the fact that they began the numbers again at 1 and there was no sale or catalogue 13. The sequence of sales is as follows: 1, 1, 3 part one, 3 part two, 4 part one, 4 part two, 5 part one, 5 part two, 6 part one, 6 part two, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 (with two catalogues differing only in the colours of their covers, some are green and some are white), and 17. The last sale was held on September 28, 1970. A further complication results from the fact that the catalogues for the art sales were usually unnumbered. Sales 9, 11, 14, and 17 were art auctions.

Montreal Book Auctions resumed with sale 18, on December 1971, and continued to May, 1979. The last two sales were held after Bernard Amtmann's death; they are numbers 119 and 120, held morning and afternoon on May 13, 1979.

The auction house was then purchased by a group headed by Craig Fraser, an old friend of Amtmann's and the proprietor of Specialty Book Concern. It was moved to Toronto and held its first sale in October, 1979, under the name Canada Book Auctions.

Canada Book Auctions held twenty-three sales, numbers 121 to 143, October 1979 to March 1983. The company was disbanded in 1983 after having paid off all its creditors.

All sales of the three companies were held in either Montreal or Toronto (including sale 47, held in Toronto, April 28, 1973) with the exceptions of sales 22 and 17, held April 30, 1970, and September 28, 1970, in Ottawa and Calgary, respectively.

A Note on the Authors

Both were longtime friends of Bernard Amtmann, John Archer being his closest friend for the last three decades of his life. They were both admirers, but each had enough differences of opinion with him over the years to be convinced that his admiration was not uncritical.

After a distinguished career as historian, archivist, and librarian, Dr. John Archer retired as President of the University of Regina, which he still serves as Professor Emeritus. John Mappin left a family business twenty years ago to become an antiquarian bookdealer.

Archer was Chief Librarian at the McLennan Library of McGill University and Mappin was Chairman of the Board of the Westmount Public Library, Montreal, for many years. Both have built collections, bought and sold rare books and are regularly consulted as evaluators of books, manuscripts, and printed ephemera. Both have been members of the National Archives Appraisal Board since its formation. They met as dinner guests of Bernard Amtmann.

This *Personal Memo* has been printed in an edition of
five hundred Copies 1 to 100 are in boards and signed
by the authors 101 to 500 are in printed wrappers

This is Number 63

BERNARD AMTMANN MAPPIN / ARCHER AMTMANN CIRCLE

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Library
of the
University of Toronto

Bernard Amtmann
1907 1979

Bernard Amtmann in the early 1970s

BERNARD AMTMANN

1907 - 1979

A PERSONAL MEMOIR

by John Mappin and John Archer

John Mappin John Archer OC

Amtmann Circle Publication for 1986
1987

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Published by The Amtmann Circle

The frontispiece photograph of Bernard Amtmann is reproduced from the original in the Bernard Amtmann papers, Literary Manuscripts Collection, by courtesy of the National Library of Canada.

Typeset in Aldus by The Coach House Press (Toronto). Printed on Zephyr Antique laid, sewn into signatures and bound by the Porcupine's Quill Inc. (Erin).

BERNARD AMTMANN's early catalogues were more influential than any other single source in raising Canadiana from the level of the dusty five- and ten-cent shelf to the respected realm of antiquarian books. Though his encouragement and counsel were unstinting, one could always be assured of his frankness even if his comments had to be unflattering, and I think his candour may have lost him some friendships, though I suspect only amongst those who confused amity with flattery. I think perhaps librarians were the longest suffering of his victims, and however warranted his detracting judgements might be, it was sometimes difficult to recognize the justice contained within the insult! Life for those within the charmed circle of Bernard's influence was never dull.

Wm. F. E. Morley

Introduction

THIS IS NOT AN ATTEMPT at formal biography. It is the recollections of friends who admired Bernard Amtmann and who wanted something of the man to be recorded for the future. We have tried to describe the Amtmann we knew, the man, his character, his talents, and his foibles. We have noted his strengths and weaknesses as we saw them, along with his enthusiasms and his bêtes noires. We have included a few facts for the record. The appendices offer a chronology of his life and work, of his publications, and of the auction house.

Above all, this is not an attempt at scholarship. We shudder at the thought that anyone should mistake it for a critical biography. If those who knew him think the work adequate, it will have served its purpose.

Bernard Amtmann lived thirty-two years in this country, arriving after the Second World War. He belonged to neither of what used to be called the Two Solitudes. He could live comfortably with either, although his background led him more naturally to French Canada. He could be critical of both, in particular of the criticisms that each had of the other.

He was fascinated by Canada and its untapped resources, as much historical and intellectual as mineral and hydro-electric. He plunged into Canadian history within weeks of his arrival and with many of his new compatriots worked to reveal one of the more dramatic of national histories. He analysed and dissected the material that passed through his hands, much as a scientist does that which passes under his microscope. He told others about it and what it should mean to them, and was clearly annoyed when they did not share his views.

He was creative, imaginative and intuitive, warm, charming, and generous. He was cantankerous, stubborn, and bellicose, and he faced criticism as one who has been inoculated faces disease, with an attitude of unperturbable superiority. His life was his work, and his work was dealing with the materials of Canadian history: finding, studying, contemplating, buying, selling, and evaluating.

We contend that for more than thirty years Bernard Amtmann made a significant contribution to the discovering and understanding of Canadian historical resources. That was why the idea came to Craig Fraser of creating the Amtmann Circle in his name. It is also the reason for this book.

1

IN NOVEMBER, 1973, a book auction in Montreal included several items of exceptional interest, the most dramatic being some unpublished poems of Louis Riel. The Montreal *Gazette* had a feature article on Bernard Amtmann and his auction house, Montreal Book Auctions Ltd. The article included a brief history of the firm, and had a few lines about Amtmann, adding that he combined some of the essential talents of Socrates and Elmer Gantry. Amtmann read the article and, turning to a man examining the material, asked him, ‘Who is Elmer Gantry?’ The answer referred him to Sinclair Lewis and American hot gospelling of the 1920s. Amtmann looked puzzled for a moment, and then brightened. ‘You mean the character played by Burt Lancaster in the movie?’ An affirmative nod. ‘Good! Good!’ beamed Amtmann, delighted.

* * *

Bernard Amtmann was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1907. He left school at fourteen to go to work, and throughout the 1920s held a number of clerical jobs. He soon acquired the knowledge and the mental agility to survive. His little subsequent formal education was gained through evening courses at the university, where the students were encouraged to participate. Young Bernard did so with the enthusiasm that was to remain with him all his life, talking more than all the other students combined. One of his professors became a major influence in his formative years, and Bernard discussed and argued with him during the evening classes and after. One night, Bernard walked the professor home continuing the discussion. They went right by the door, walking and talking through the night, ending only with the dawn.

He tried his hand at a number of entrepreneurial ventures in the depression years of the 1930s, with indifferent results. One was photography, where his ingenuity came up with a promising new process, but before it could become profitable the spectre of Nazism covered Europe. He left Vienna in 1938, on the day the German army arrived; he got his family out shortly after and, with his mother and father, settled in France. He joined the French army and was stationed with his regiment in northern France. In the Spring of 1940 the German Blitzkrieg rolled over Holland and Belgium and into France. His regiment was overrun and its remnants swept south with the masses of refugees fleeing the Germans. His parents, at first in Paris, also went south. Somehow, son and parents got together and found refuge in Montauban. There he worked at various menial jobs and joined the French underground army.

After the war Ammann worked for a couple of years in France and then emigrated to Canada. Before leaving France he did a little buying and selling of old books. He arrived in Ottawa in the autumn of 1947, with two suitcases of books and a few dollars in cash, and in a matter of days was in the antiquarian book business. He soon realized that his future lay in Canadian books and his study of Canadian history started immediately.

The following year he issued his first catalogues. At the start they supplied an abundance of scholarly information, which helped establish him with the rare book librarians who found them a delight to read and informative as well. The detailed descriptions tended to disappear after the early catalogues. They reappeared to some extent when rare material was catalogued though most of the rarities were sold to private collectors or librarians who visited his shop or by telephone. Such descriptions were to reappear regularly when he started to produce the auction catalogues. In 1950 his imprint appeared for the first time, on his edition of *The North-West Passage*, a poem by G. S. Venables, which had won the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge in 1831. Also in 1950 he moved to Montreal and carried on his business in a small store on Greene Avenue, living on the same street above Sherbrooke, where it became Mount Pleasant Avenue. Later his business was carried on from three different Sherbrooke Street West addresses: 750, at the corner of Victoria Street, then 1176, at the corner of Stanley, and lastly at 1529, just east of Côte des Neiges.

As an adopted rather than a native son he brought the passion of the convert to his field. His knowledge of German

French, and English gave him unusual access to material, and he recognized the significance of much that left others unmoved. He worked with a sense of drama, of discovery, of excitement, as he established the importance of pamphlets and printed ephemera. He rejected the alternatives of either ignoring Canadian history or being obsessed by it. His interest was pan-Canadian, not localized to one region, nor restricted to one aspect or language. His disdain for the parochial perspective was evident in discussion, and he argued that our history and the men who made it were uniquely fascinating. In a remarkably short time he acquired an extensive working knowledge, and, equally important, he learned how to establish facts and check references.

His independent spirit led to his later problems with some librarians and archivists. He could not understand the need for meetings and budgets and buying by committee. In his view the nature of bureaucratic structure was such that it filtered original thought from an enquiring mind until it was unable to think beyond institutional platitudes. He had contempt for small indigenous minds which did not understand or appreciate the immense heritage that was ours, the national self-denigrators happy to defer to the Old World or the United States.

Amtmann took people seriously. He asked pointed questions. He wished to discover early the aptitude of those he dealt with, whether a new acquaintance had that spark of originality that was his own dominant characteristic. He argued that the Canadian antiquarian book trade should become more professional, because it was to the dealers' mutual benefit to do so. By the early 1960s he had become convinced of the need for a trade association, and in time he convinced the more important of his colleagues. The result was the formation of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada, which held its first annual meeting in Ottawa in 1967. To encourage the exchange of ideas which the ABAC had started, he published *Abacus* and the first ten numbers of *Canadian Notes & Queries*, working with William Morley, then Curator of Special Collections at Queen's University. (For details, see Appendix A.)

People entering the trade found him a generous and helpful colleague. His knowledge and reference library were at their

disposal; he answered questions about material, he gave advice on pricing, he sold them good material cheap, and even made his mailing list available to newcomers preparing their first catalogues. He never talked down to the young nor patronized them. When the film *Mary Poppins* won a large number of young hearts, Amtmann met on the street one day a friend with an eight-year-old daughter. The friend, with ceremony, introduced the two, adding for his daughter's benefit: "Mr Amtmann is an expert on books, Jane. If you have a question about any book, I'm sure he'd be happy to answer it." Back came an enthusiastic question about Mary Poppins, provoking a delighted reply from the expert. The answer was informative and equally enthusiastic. It avoided details but included suggestions as to how further information might be had. A question about a book from an interested person had been treated with the respect it deserved.

During a career of thirty-two years, Amtmann issued about 400 lists and catalogues, some 280 through Bernard Amtmann Inc., and 120 from Montreal Book Auctions. In addition, he published nineteen volumes as author, compiler or publisher, several articles in his catalogues, others in periodicals, and many letters to the editor. His great ambition was to be in charge of a national bibliography.

Amtmann could be vitriolic and sometimes unfair, but his annoyance was often well founded. Once, at a Toronto Book Fair in the mid-1970s, the acquisitions librarian of one of the wealthiest libraries in the country stopped at his booth and said, with a look of accomplishment on her face, that she had toured the entire fair and had managed to resist buying a single book. This woman, responsible for the development of an important collection, considered it a triumph to tour the booths of seventy-five leading dealers and to buy nothing, a sense of accomplishment embellished by a beaming self-satisfaction. To Amtmann, this was the negative outlook of too many librarians refined to its essence. It was the sort of thing that had him into his armour and on to the field of battle. He was a formidable foe. He heaped ridicule and scorn on the fat cats of the Canadian book world, and he was right often enough to maintain the affection and respect of most of the best of them. There is little

doubt that he often acted contrary to his own economic interest.

If his polemics produced crises with an air of artificiality about them, they increased his effectiveness in a way that gentle argument could not. His penchant for rushing to the podium or having a press conference to air his views and grind his axes made Canadian institutions more sensitive to their obligation to acquire important material.

Amtmann did business under his own name, and then branched out into literary first editions, in partnership with Laurie Lerew, formerly an employee. He founded the first Canadian book auction firm. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1970, and received an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan in 1974.

He was of slight build, five feet six and one hundred and twenty-five pounds. He ate sparingly, drank a little wine, chain smoked, and drank endless cups of coffee. In his later years he suffered from heart trouble. In the autumn of 1978, he entered hospital for the last time. He died in his 72nd year, on January 9, 1979.

In the few pages of autobiographical notes he left, he asked with untypical wistfulness if he hadn't been too critical, too much of a gadfly. He must have written that on a bad day. The essential Amtmann could never accept a *status quo* or admit an error. After his death, one admirer admitted to having had more battles with Bernard Amtmann than with the rest of the book world combined, and added that his respect and affection continued undiminished. The spark of his genius was as difficult to grasp as it was to define.

II

BERNARD AMTMANN was born in Vienna on July 11, 1907, the first of three children of Jacob Emil Amtmann and his wife Amalia Wengraf. The following year a daughter, Johanna (usually known as Hansi), was born, and two years later a second son, Willy. The family was Jewish and well integrated into an Austrian society that had for generations welcomed the cultural gifts and business acumen of the Jews. They were of modest means, but learning, music, and the arts were important elements of their family life.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire which had been a force in Europe for generations was now in its last years. The First World War broke out and Jacob Amtmann served in the Austrian army. Defeat in 1918 brought the dismemberment of the Empire, the creation of new nation states, a much reduced Austria, and ensuing economic chaos. Austria became a republic. Vienna, one of the great cities of Europe, lost much of its economic and cultural supremacy as the Empire disintegrated. By 1919, conditions at home had become so bad that the children were sent to foster homes abroad to avoid starvation. They returned the following year as conditions improved.

At school the language of instruction was German, with French taught as a second language and English available if desired. Musical evenings were a regular event among the Amtmann family and friends. Their father was an avid reader, a regular patron of two of the local public libraries, bringing home books to encourage the children to read. The Amtmann children produced plays and concerts in the home. Typically, Bernard took charge. He wrote the material, allocated parts and directed the production. Willy handled the music and Hansi was the cashier, and the invited friends and relatives were charged a small fee to cover the costs of production. Theirs was a particularly happy family, together after the trauma of war and want. Their religious life was relaxed. They observed the High Holidays but otherwise followed for the most part the typical lives of the lower middle class. Even as a youth, Bernard

tended to look at the world from a rationalist, secular view. At fourteen he left school and went to work, the normal course for a young man of his circumstances.

He worked first as a messenger and then became an apprentice in a bank. The work was boring, with little challenge at his level. He left and got a job with a printing company. He became engrossed in photography, photographic equipment, and printing machines. There was scope for a young, active mind in a period of innovation. His new job went well, and in 1934 he was able to establish his own business in photographic supplies. He opened an office with Hansi as his assistant. His home was his warehouse. It was a small beginning but it meant independence and the opportunity to be creative.

The university was beyond reach but there were evening courses available. Bernard was interested in philosophy and had the good fortune to study under Dr. Wilhelm Lowinger, an able professor with the ability to nourish hungry young minds. Lowinger responded kindly to the youthful enthusiast who tended to dominate the discussions in class, and the two would often argue and discuss well into the night. Under Lowinger's influence, Bernard's philosophical development led him to agnosticism. He looked at the world from a secular perspective; politically, his were the evolving views of the young social democrat. His emotions became as volatile as his ideas. He fell in love in the late 1930s and probably would have married but for the signs of approaching war.

Jacob Amtmann lost his job in the Great Depression, but Bernard's business prospered. The photographic field was in a period of transition, and he was fascinated by the new technologies and processes which appeared ready to revolutionize the world of photography.

Economic chaos weakened the liberal democracies and brought on the rise of totalitarianism. Germany, burdened by war debts, unemployment, and food shortages, fell prey to nationalism. Adolf Hitler led the National Socialist German Workers' Party to power, promising to regain for Germany her rightful place in the world, to reassert German pride, and to escape the punitive conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. Jews throughout Europe watched with apprehension as the Nazis

secured their rule at home and moved without serious opposition to expand their borders in Europe In Austria a new constitution was adopted on May 1 1934 which established a quasi Christian fascist state Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered by Nazi stormtroopers in Vienna on July 25 1934

Meanwhile Bernard had become acquainted with a man working on an invention to revolutionize existing methods of copying and reproducing prints They became partners as Bernard agreed to finance the research and in due course he decided to go to London to attempt to sell the process after it had progressed to the appropriate point Before he could go conditions worsened in Austria as the local Nazi movement became increasingly powerful Secret police prepared lists of communists and Jews The German Army entered Austria on March 11 1938 The following day Bernard and his partner left Vienna and made their way to France

Once in France Bernard tried to go to London but with the imminence of war England had closed its borders to many refugees in the interest of national security He could not return to Vienna An immigrant without papers in France in 1938 had little choice of jobs He decided upon a course of action which would satisfy his sense of honour and give him security he volunteered for the French army was accepted and sent to a regiment at Auxerre in the north of France This gave him a recognized status in France

Hansi had been permitted to emigrate to Britain where she had obtained employment as a domestic servant The senior Amtmanns had returned home one evening to find the keyhole of their door filled with lead They went into hiding for a few days until a train journey was arranged that took them to the French-German border A car picked them up and took them to lodgings that Bernard had arranged for them in Paris

Only Willy remained in Vienna and he was in danger Hansi explained the problem to her English employer who provided the solution by arranging a ship s passage for Willy with Shanghai as the alleged destination The ruse worked and Willy was allowed to enter England just before war broke out between Germany and Britain As an alien from a potentially enemy country there were difficulties He volunteered for the British army and was accepted but on the outbreak of war he was discharged and sent into internment in Canada as an enemy alien of military age Willy studied draughtsmanship in the camp and was able to keep up his music providing entertainment for the staff and his fellow internees It was a relaxed confinement but still imprisonment in a strange country far from family and friends

Bernard corresponded regularly with Hansi until the end of the so-called phony war He wrote in English to make himself more familiar with the language and Hansi had his letters corrected and sent them back Life continued with Bernard in the army in the north and his parents in Paris until the war started in earnest in the spring of 1940 The German Blitzkrieg rolled over Holland and Belgium and into France Bernard s regiment was overrun and its survivors swept south along with the masses of refugees fleeing the Germans His parents left Paris and reached Nevers France surrendered and the Germans occupied much of the country Bernard and his parents went on to unoccupied France and settled quietly in Montauban Bernard did various menial jobs and joined the Resistance the French underground army

He got a job as a waiter in a hotel frequented by German officers With his knowledge of French and German and some English, he became an interpreter for the Germans a position which informed him about German activities in the area His underground unit was engaged in sabotage Wiry and tough, inventive and determined Bernard became a sergeant in the Resistance with the cover name of Amouroux There was always the danger of a slip of knowing too much, of showing some emotion when the diners discussed a train derailment or a sabotaged factory

His parents grew old and his father died. He was buried in Montauban His mother lost interest in the world and was finally taken by Bernard to a convent, where she was cared for and hidden from the Germans

In June 1944 the Allies invaded Normandy Bernard s group, along with the other Resistance units joined the Free French forces as regulars He fought in various actions as the Allies battled their way through France and into Germany The

Germans surrendered in May, 1945, and Hansi was able to visit her family during the summer. They and their mother discussed the future and agreed they would not return to Vienna. They would make a fresh start in the New World. Hansi had been engaged to a young Austrian prior to her going to England in 1938. His name was Bruno Lamberger, and he had gone to Rhodesia the same year that she went to England. After the war they married and moved to New York.

In Canada, Willy had been released from internment in October, 1942. His training as a draughtsman in the camp provided him with qualifications which enabled him to get a job with an architect. He had also given music lessons and later he was to return to music as a teacher with the Ottawa Board of Education, and, years later, to publish a history of music in Canada.* By 1947, Willy was established in Ottawa. Bernard and his mother were unable to go to New York because this could only be done under the quota system for Austrian immigrants. It would be easier to go to Ottawa, and in many ways Canada was more attractive. It, too, offered freedom, opportunity, and unlimited potential. In addition, there was a large French speaking element, and in French Canada something of the atmosphere of the Old World. After the usual delays, Bernard and his mother arrived in Ottawa in October, 1947.

Bernard was now forty years of age. He arrived in Canada with two suitcases of books and a few dollars in Canadian currency. On his way he had stopped in London and met several leading antiquarian book dealers. His lifelong interest in books and writing found a new avenue for development. He came to Canada determined to enter the old book trade. It was a

good time to do so. The Canadian government had commissioned Vincent Massey to head a review of the arts, letters and sciences, and to make recommendations as to how best they might be encouraged. Universities and public libraries were about to enter the golden age of their expansion, with large amounts of money becoming available to increase their library holdings, and there was soon to be founded the National Library of Canada.

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*The idea of writing the history occurred to Willy one day while browsing through old books on Bernard's shelves. Bernard encouraged and guided him, which led Willy first to his doctoral thesis and then on to the book. The English edition appeared in 1975 and the French edition the following year. In his preface, Willy paid his brother the following tribute: "Special gratitude is due my brother Bernard, whose book collection of Canadiana sparked [my] curiosity and whose enthusiasm for historical research inspired the desire to trace the springs of musical art in Early Quebec." (See Appendix 2.)

Bernard's most pressing need was to earn a living for himself and his mother. He made his first sale within days of arriving in Ottawa, and immersed himself in the study of Canadian history. He spent hours in the Public Archives and the Library of Parliament, studying and familiarizing himself with their resources.

In his first two years in Ottawa he produced and distributed four catalogues of old books. They included poetry, religion and history, as well as Canadiana. He made a living from the start by hard work and careful management, and having that indispensable flair for recognizing rare and important material. In his first catalogue he listed William Parry's *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage*, London, 1842, at $12.00, and Samuel Hearne's *Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson Bay* ... London, 1795, at $125.00. He also stated he expected both to rise in value in the future. In 1979 the Parry was selling for $200.00 and in 1986 it sold for $650.00. The Hearne sold for $2,200.00 at auction in 1979.

Hansi and Bruno Lamberger moved to Montreal from New York in early October, 1950, and Bernard pondered the same move. Montreal was a better city for book dealers and there were more collectors. It was largely a French-speaking city, bigger than Ottawa and more cosmopolitan. His mother had been unable to visit Hansi in New York because of immigration restrictions. Bernard and his mother moved to Montreal in early November, 1950.

III

BERNARD AMTMANN opened a store on Greene Avenue in Westmount in May, 1951, first briefly at 1215 and then at 1247, exactly where the entrance to Westmount Square is today. He began to develop a walk-in trade, a regular retail business in addition to his catalogue business, and he became increasingly aware of the importance of printed ephemera.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ephemera as "insect[s] living only a day . . . [a] short-lived thing." Printed ephemera are anything printed to serve a specific purpose: a politician's poster or handbill in the days leading to an election, a notice announcing the arrival of the circus or an itinerant pedlar of patent medicines. They range in substance from the Proclamations of 1792, announcing the granting of land to Loyalists in the Eastern Townships and Upper Canada, to the invitation by a merchant in a small town to his end-of-season clearance sale. They often took the form of broadsides, a single sheet printed on one side, which sometimes appeared as advertisements in local newspapers as well.

A random selection might include a legal form from the 1810s with the blanks to be filled in, a warning to citizens to beware of rabid dogs in Quebec City in 1819, a licence to sell spirituous liquors from the 1830s, a notice advertising a reward for information leading to the arrest of an arsonist who set fire to a lumber mill in Hawkesbury, Ontario, in 1844, a sale of needlework in a church bazaar in Quebec City in 1855, the Annual Meeting of the Fruit Growers' Association of Upper Canada in St. Catharines, Ontario, in 1864, the Grand Entertainment of the Y.W.C.T.U. of Aylmer, Ontario, in January, 1888, Sir John A. Macdonald's bookplate, and a Boer War Christmas card sent home by a member of the Canadian contingent in South Africa.

The importance of printed ephemera has increased in recent years with the emphasis on social history: who knew that Quebec City had a problem with rabid dogs in 1819? Or that an arsonist set fire to a paper mill in Hawkesbury in 1844? Or that the reward notice was printed by Armour in Montreal? These and a near infinite number of other purposes and causes are recorded primarily and sometimes only in printed ephemera nailed to trees and handed to passersby destined to disappear in the wind and the rain

There have been thousands of these items printed throughout the years almost all thrown away or used to light fires Occasionally someone kept some of them perhaps a mother because a son was running for office a benevolent society with a meticulous secretary keeping records or a printer maintaining his files Most decades had their distinctive styles of printing the 1810s the 1850s and the 1890s differ substantially and a collection of a dozen samples from each year would provide a succinct history of Canadian printing in the nineteenth century available in no other way and one that would fit in a suitcase

Ephemera were indispensable to the political process recording spontaneous reactions to the issues of the day dashed off rather than planned polemical rather than scholarly They refuted and rebutted they heaped ridicule and scorn They were often anonymous to avoid libel or physical assault. They were contemporary contentious and argumentative valuable historical documents and primary sources Crudely printed and cheaply produced they became victims of time and wear ignored as unscholarly and intemperate

Nowadays we are inundated with ephemera at every election Parties and candidates publish a vast quantity of material and some libraries collect it as it appears Probably less than five percent of those published in the nineteenth century are recorded, and as material on the Rebellion of 1837 the question of Confederation the Riel Rebellions of 1870 and 1885 and the building of the CPR is found, it is sought after and commands a high price

Amtmann was soon at home in the antiquarian book business in Montreal He moved comfortably in both the French and English milieux and if his business developed more in the English milieu it was because of the greater size of the North American English-speaking market He soon had a ready facility in English Throughout his career he sought advice on how to express his thoughts but his written and spoken English

soon surpassed that of the average anglophone citizen. His letters, briefs, and papers argued his case with competence, eloquence, and assurance. He was probably more relaxed, more naturally at home with the francophone writers and intellectuals, many of whom became friends or friendly acquaintances. His tastes in food and drink and his view of life in general were more French than English.

The Canadian Library Association held its annual meetings in different cities across the country. Amtmann sometimes attended, finding them excellent opportunities to meet the leading librarians, to make friends, to exchange views, and to find new customers. Many, from the time of their first meeting, looked to him as a source of information and important material, and his shop attracted customers from all over the country. Academics, students, collectors, publishers of small presses tended to gravitate to his shop and usually were shown new and exciting material to examine and consider. Amtmann had a flair for bringing along the small collector, for encouraging him and finding him fine items that weren't expensive, but, at the same time, looking forward to the day when the novice would be in the market for rare material. Lord Beaverbrook, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Gregory Javitch were among the important collectors who frequented his shop, and no dealer played a more important role than he did in building the notable collections of Lawrence Lande.

His knowledge of Canadian material and the major holdings of it in Canada and the United States continued to grow as he studied the bibliographies. He learned the importance of agrarian radicals in Western Canada, the role both religious and secular of the church in French Canada, and the influence of the Loyalist tradition throughout English Eastern Canada, and he continued to find books, pamphlets, and ephemera that were not recorded.

His sister Hansi had originally worked as a seamstress in Montreal. As his business grew, both she and her husband worked in the bookshop. In 1956, she joined her brother full-time. She opened the store, looked after orders, served customers, and managed the accounts. Her manner and presence inspired confidence and gave an air of stability and order to the business. Amtmann was an early riser and often worked long into the night. He was frequently away from the office looking for material, and he depended on his sister, in effect the office manager, to look after things in his absence.

As the universities expanded, there was increasing demand for books. Developing Canadian studies required ever-increasing library resources, with special collections more and more prominent. He added another assistant, Laurie Lerew, an Australian who had settled in Montreal. In 1960, the American Library Association and the Canadian Library Association both held conventions in Montreal. The presence of thousands of librarians offered a unique opportunity to booksellers, and Mrs. Lerew quickly proved a useful addition to the Amtmann team. In the fall of 1960, he set up Laurie Hill Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bernard Amtmann Inc., to deal in non-Canadian material and modern first editions. Laurie Lerew was in charge and the business did well from the start.

The 1960s saw an unprecedented growth in the number of new Canadian universities and graduate schools. There was likewise a proliferation of community colleges. All these institutions required vast quantities of books, and sales escalated dramatically, matched by the output of Amtmann catalogues. In 1956 and 1957, twenty-four and twenty-three lists and catalogues were published, respectively. The total from 1956 to 1960 was eighty-seven; 1961 to 1966 saw one hundred and fifteen, with the extraordinary number of forty in 1962 alone.

It was during this lavish period that universities, for instance York and Alberta, bought the entire contents of bookshops and, in the case of the University of Alberta, acquired the proprietor as well, to be in charge of acquisitions. Amtmann worked out an arrangement with some institutions to provide quantities of material at a unit price. When Queen's decided to build a comprehensive collection of basic material relating to French Canada, he shipped them everything he thought appropriate and the university returned those titles they already had. It may sound peculiar at this distance and in a period of declining acquisitions, but it was practical in those days of vast budgets and small holdings. Queen's acquired thousands of titles at unit price well below their current catalogue value. He offered the same arrangement to other institutions most of which declined on the grounds that they not the bookseller should decide what was appropriate to their collections Bernard not very reasonably resented their presumption

With so much demand the prices of both new and old books rose dramatically New books doubled in price in less than a decade Early Champlain Society volumes quadrupled in price in fifteen years The beautiful first volume of the Lande Bibliography appeared in 1965 perhaps the finest book ever produced in Canada. It was published in two limited editions the fine at $350 and the trade at $135 although the term trade edition sounds peculiar when used to describe so outstanding a production

Amtmann was delightedly in the vanguard as prices soared although he faced growing criticism from librarians Collectors were generally pleased when they had higher valuations on their collections but less so when they attempted to buy The best titles always sold at any price even after buyers resistance finally brought a little order to the market Amtmann began to enjoy entertaining as he achieved a measure of financial stability He became a connoisseur of the better restaurants He enjoyed the sauna baths at Le Cartier dined and played bridge with friends bought and sold and talked history literature, books and bibliography

In his reflective moments he dreamed about a large and important company involved in all aspects of the antiquarian book business It would operate world wide and he would run it from Montreal It would include rare books literature first editions manuscripts unrecorded pamphlets and the finest maps It would have an auction house and a publishing house Lost material would reappear and it would be marketed with its significance revealed and its splendour properly described How he would have delighted in that extraordinary letter of Sir John A Macdonald that Craig Fraser offered for sale through Canada Book Auctions on December 3 1979 in sale 122 as lot 146

Macdonald had been in England for several months negotiating the final form of the British North America Act which was to bring about Canadian Confederation He wrote to Sir Henry James Sumner Maine in Calcutta from London April 9, 1867

It was a long letter, entirely in Sir John's hand, discussing the legal development of Lower Canada, and concluding with the following remarkable statement:

> I have been in England since November & at last succeeded. I sail in 4 days for Canada with the act uniting all British America in my pocket. A brilliant future would certainly await us were it not for these wretched Yankees who hunger & thirst for Naboth's field [i.e. Canada] — War will come someday between England and the United States and India can do us Yeoman's service by sending an army of Sikhs – Ghoorkas, Belooches, etc, etc – across the Pacific to St. [sic] Francisco and holding that beautiful and immoral city with the surrounding California as security for Montreal and Canada.

Was Macdonald serious? He certainly wasn't drunk, his stereotype notwithstanding, for it comes at the end of a long discussion of complex legal questions cogently expressed. It is known that some members of Lincoln's cabinet had wanted to keep the Northern Army intact after the American Civil War to conquer Canada in the interest of American Manifest Destiny. There had been recent Fenian raids into Canada from American bases. The Biblical reference may seem obscure to some today, but what is clear is that the Prime Minister of Canada was apprehensive about a possible American invasion. By the time Amtmann had organized the publicity (and appeared on American television news!), the letter would have been known throughout the English-speaking world and beyond.

IV

THE IDEA OF AN AUCTION HOUSE had been in Bernard Amtmann's mind for years. The big auction houses of the United States, Britain, and France auctioned books, but they auctioned other things as well: paintings, silver, china, weapons, manuscripts, anything that appeared likely to create interest and revenue. Amtmann wanted an auction house dealing exclusively with books, manuscripts, pamphlets, maps, prints and the like, so that these might be recognized for their own importance rather than as marginal activities of firms specializing in other things. He had in the past encouraged others to establish such a house, but without result. When a fine opportunity presented itself, Bernard leaped into the breach.

He had been asked by the president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec to appraise their library's holdings. The Society is the oldest of Canadian learned societies, its antecedents going back to a public library started by Governor Haldimand in 1780. Its interest in history, natural history, science and literature started in the early nineteenth century, and its first publication appeared in 1829. Its library has continued to the present day, a small public library in Quebec City catering to the English-speaking and -reading public of the Old Capital. In 1966 it faced an acute shortage of operating funds. Some of its valuable holdings were more of American than of local interest, and even some of the local titles might be better held by larger libraries with modern means of conservation and security. Amtmann recommended that a number of the more valuable books be put up to public auction, and the less valuable books be disposed of through a dealer. The Society agreed and asked him to manage the sale.

With a large number of dramatic items available from so illustrious a source, and no book auction available in Montreal, he decided to fill the lack himself. He formed Montreal Book Auctions Ltd., and arranged the first sale for the spring of 1967. It was held in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal, April 26, 1967; it was well organized and well promoted and aroused much public interest it was a financial success with sales of close to $50 000 or more than $200 000 in terms of the value of money in 1987 Two of the more dramatic items were a made-up atlas of contemporary maps of the American Revolutionary War and a copy of the first book printed in Montreal the rare first edition of the *Reglement de la Confrerie de l adoration perpetuelle du Saint Sacrement et de la bonne mort* (Tremaine *Canadian Imprints* 230) printed by Fleury Mesplet in 1776 The buyers included prominent institutions in Quebec and Ontario American universities and British antiquarian book dealers among them the firm of Charles W Traylen of Guildford England

Amtmann was quick to learn that the success of an auction depended upon the arrangement of the lots offered the presiding auctioneer the promotion of the sale and above all on the material put up for sale Rare and important material carefully placed throughout the auction will bring good prices and enhance the value of the ordinary material that must provide the bread and butter Exciting items arouse interest from around the world

Montreal Book Auctions held six sales between April 1967 and November 1968 and shortly after the sixth it was announced that Christie Manson & Woods of London had bought into Montreal Book Auctions in a joint venture which saw the London firm with four members on the board of directors along with Bernard Amtmann Laurie Lerew and Arthur Gill a Montreal businessman and art collector The new company held twenty sales from April 1969 to September 1970 eighteen in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal one in Ottawa and one in Calgary in April and September 1970 respectively The joint venture was dissolved in some bitterness in October 1970

Amtmann had emphasized from the beginning that the purpose of the new company was not to create a Canadian arm of the London firm but rather to establish Montreal as an international centre for fine art and to attract Canadian material back to Canada to be sold at auction There was a clash of policies and personalities With the dissolution of the joint venture Bernard reactivated Montreal Book Auctions and he held an auction at the Ritz in December, 1970. Christie's continued briefly to operate in Montreal with Louise Lerew as their Montreal agent. Montreal Book Auctions continued until Bernard's death. It was subsequently sold to a group headed by Craig Fraser, the proprietor of Specialty Book Concern. The new owners moved the business to Toronto and changed the name to Canada Book Auctions. (For details of the history of the auction house, see Appendix c.)

By the time Amtmann returned to the auction business on his own, his reputation had led to an increasing demand for his services as an appraiser. Most of the valuations were done for private individuals or estates. Some were for government and academic institutions. They were a useful source of income and sometimes of material as well. His advice was often sought on the disposal of duplicates and collections, which provided him with a supply of books and manuscripts. He had hoped to interest friends among the librarians and archivists across the country to from a corps of appraisers to advise on the disposal of duplicates and thus encourage material back into the market. The scheme never materialized because his friends wished to avoid the possibility of apparent conflict of interest, so most of them rejected the idea out of hand. Later, the Canadian Government, through its Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board, popularly known as the Cultural Property Board, provided something of the kind by offering tax concessions to those who turn national treasures over to recognized repositories. The Board has worked well thus far, and for the most part has managed to avoid certain sleazy practices which have plagued such donations in the United States.

Amtmann's interests led him to join many associations and societies, in particular those related to bibliography, book collecting and publishing. He saw the need for a society of dealers in this country and was instrumental in forming the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada. Early in 1963 he began to discuss the formation of such a society with his colleagues. He stressed the advantages of a forum for an exchange of views. There was an increasing interest shown by the trade over the years and in due course the association was formed. The first annual meeting was held in Ottawa in 1967, and the association

has grown in importance through the years.

He was also active in the many attempts to form associations of bibliophiles, some of which held regular meetings. Most of them had a following for a while and then disappeared. When good intentions failed to sustain a number of such organizations, he began one of his own. He founded the Erasmus Circle in 1968. It was, he said, an informal organization of bookmen and bibliophiles who met from time to time to discuss matters relevant to the world of books. The Erasmus Circle had no conventional membership. Anyone who turned up to a meeting was considered a member. Bernard got the idea (as well as the name) from a sentence in a letter from King Francis I of France to the Dutch philosopher: 'I want you to know that if you are willing to come you will be most welcome.'*

Under his hand the Circle published several issues of a bulletin, and organized a symposium held in conjunction with the Antiquarian Book Fair in Montreal in July 1971. The subject for discussion was a recurring theme and one of increasing sensitivity at the time: the relationship between antiquarian booksellers, collectors, academics, librarians, and archivists. In his remarks opening the symposium, Amtmann said that as founder he felt it inappropriate to take a leading part, but that such a society might encourage Canadians to broaden their outlooks. The idea for the Circle had come to him while visiting the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia. 'I was fascinated to be in a place where the spirit of the greatest American bookseller, one of the greatest of bibliophiles, has been kept alive.' He thought in the future the Circle might provide pleasure in the form of a fine dinner in addition to providing food for the mind. Canada lacked such a society, and the Erasmus Circle, centered in Montreal, should be a symbol of the two cultures. 'Le Cercle Erasme could become a symbol for what Montreal with its dual culture could be now and for the future.' Bernard did what he could to infuse his own enthusiasm and drive into the society. He obtained from Clive Driver, Director of the Rosenbach

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*The postscript to a letter written from Saint Germain-en-Laye on 7 July [1523]. We owe this reference to Dr. Ron Schoeffel of the University of Toronto Press.

Foundation, the famous Erasmus Bible, one of three copies printed on vellum, to be exhibited at the Montreal meeting. The event created interest and publicity, but the Erasmus Circle itself faded into oblivion in the ensuing months.

In conjunction with his role in the formation of the ABAC, Bernard's office published *Abacus* and the first ten numbers of *Canadian Notes and Queries*, with news, views, information, and questions relating to Canadiana studies. The latter was carried on by William Morley after Bernard's death, with Michel Thériault, and others later, as associate editor.

With the revival of his own auction business, Ammann looked for continuing support from collectors, public libraries, the universities, and above all from the National Library and the Public Archives in Ottawa. The excitement of the auction had captivated him, and the participation of the major libraries and archives publicized their commitment in a way that receiving and ordering from a catalogue could not. This, however, led to an odd situation, and one which showed him at other than his best. He had been criticized for the prices of some of his rare material, and he thought the auction offered the means of answering that criticism. If there was open competition for a fine piece of rare Canadiana, if a free market prevailed, then the marketplace would decide the right price. He was annoyed when the institutions agreed among themselves not to compete in certain areas and for some of the rarest material. The same people who criticized his prices would agree among themselves not to let the free market determine what the price should be. Collusion (he thundered to anyone who happened to be around), producing a combination in restraint of trade.

In fact, such arrangements, illegal or otherwise, could only eliminate a few potential competitors; the nation's libraries often disagreed among themselves, and the abler collection builders only let the books they really wanted go elsewhere with the greatest reluctance. He was especially critical of archivists. He came to view archivists as the bane of antiquarian booksellers because they tended to believe that unique items of historical importance belonged to them by right. They were not used to paying for manuscripts and they wanted no competition from antiquarian booksellers who had to be businessmen as well as scholars. He rejected the lofty ideals which flowed as patriotic claptrap from behind the archivists' walls as they basked somnolent in their tenure. Bookdealers were as patriotic as archivists, and examples were legion of important material being offered free to archivists who returned it as unworthy and then bought it when it was offered for sale by a dealer who had recognized its importance. Canadian material was being bought by foreign collectors and institutions. As things were, he maintained, significant pieces of the Canadian heritage were being bought by Americans for American institutions. If the custodians of the artifacts of our heritage were really concerned over the loss of national treasures, they could save them by outbidding the foreign competition at auction.

His views found ready access to the newspapers. Dr. Wilfrid Smith, the Dominion Archivist, replied, scoffing at the suggestion that much Canadian material of historical importance was finding its way to the United States. He suggested that the publicity given in the press helped the cause of opportunistic sellers and urged Canadian archival repositories to resist being held to ransom by the bogey of American buyers ready to pay exorbitant prices for manuscripts. Canada was already carrying on a steady and vigorous repatriation of historical manuscripts and records from France, Great Britain, and the United States. Instead of spending large sums of money on single documents such as the incomplete McLeod Diary, it was "better to use our limited resources on acquisition and preservation of important collections of lasting research value, which will truly represent the heritage of Canada." (Letter to the *Montreal Star*, November 30, 1971.) Amtmann refrained from further comment at the time, but noted that it was no thanks to the Public Archives that the Riel Diary remained in Canada, since they had dropped out of the bidding early, and it had been left to a private Canadian citizen, a Metis and former Member of Parliament, Gene Rhéaume, to ensure that it remained here.

Over the years, Amtmann considered various ways of setting up a corporation or a group of individuals for the purpose of buying items which might otherwise be lost to Canada. There was some support in both Eastern and Western Canada, but not enough to organize it in a formal way. One version was to function as The Hundred Associates, a good historical name, which would operate in the manner that Arthur Doughty's Hundred Associates had for the Public Archives in the 1920s. A few items were actually bought in this way with the auction house acting as agents, and were subsequently resold to Canadian repositories.

Amtmann's view of Canadian heritage and the whole question of nationalism went beyond the traditional platitudes. He had seen enough of the raw nationalist spirit to turn him against such an emotion forever. He was proud to be a Canadian, a choice he had freely made; he felt it a privilege to be a citizen of a country with traditions of freedom and justice; he was annoyed by the divisions within the country and had little sympathy with extreme views of any stripe; and he was upset by what seemed to him to be indifference to a splendid heritage. Canadians were aimless as a people and not making the most of their vast potential. In his considered opinion archivists, librarians, and the appropriate departments of government should be providing leadership in cultural matters, but this leadership was lacking.

Amtmann had arrived in this country with little money and few prospects. By hard work and application, he had fashioned a niche for himself in a new society. He had become recognized as a specialist in Canadian historical material and a leader in the antiquarian book world. Obviously, it was to his material advantage that there be an increasing interest in books, manuscripts, and such, but those who knew him best were convinced that his devotion to the preservation of our heritage took precedence over pecuniary gain. He gave unstintingly of his time and money to promote the interests of the book trade, and as the trade gained respect, a good deal of its progress was owing to him.

One serious shortcoming was his lack of understanding of the problems of library administration. He never recognized the number of demands on library budgets, even in their palmiest days. Plan as a librarian might to add to the Rare Book Room and the Canadiana Collection, the pressure of numbers required that an increasing portion of the library budget be used for the books needed by undergraduates. Likewise, the number

and the cost of periodicals soared almost beyond belief

Amtmann never fully appreciated the Canadian tradition of support for the Public Archives support which engendered budgetary allocations for the acquisition of material When an important item became available at high cost he assumed that the money could and should be found as indeed it often was He could not accept that an important piece was not bought by the Public Archives for reasons other than ignorance or indifference

What he saw was the institutions spending tens of thousands of dollars to purchase collections and papers of Canadian authors spending hundreds of thousands to purchase the papers of an eminent British philosopher and the National Gallery spending a million for the acquisition of a single painting He favoured these expenditures, but asked if these were worth the price why were the letters of a Laurier or a Molson not also worthy of purchase? Politicians could find the money for glamorous expenditures but not for priceless, unique historical papers and artifacts

When interest in the Riel Diary was slow to materialize he saw Canadians as immature and puritanical not yet aware that exceptional pieces required substantial outlay The press often seemed to share his preference for the colourful and dramatic rather than the factual and accurate When the McLeod Diary was sold to the agent for an American institution, he was reported to have said 'We lost our land [the Old Northwest stretching as far as the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers] to the States and now we have lost the manuscript that is the proof of that loss

His description of the Molson letters which were offered for sale in 1973 as having all the fascination of a Canadian Forsyte Saga was colourful but the analogy false The correspondence was between a husband and wife over fourteen years the Forsyte Saga dealt with the complex family relationships over three generations When neither the Molson Papers nor the Laurier love letters received adequate bids he felt injured insulted, and frustrated, and with good reason A decade later they would have sold for two or three times the price

Bernard put his thoughts in an open letter to Canadian

archivists which appeared in *The Canadian Archivist* of May 1974. It is a brilliant polemic and should be read in its entirety. Here we attempt a summary. Starting with "some of my best friends are archivists and librarians," he went on to say that he found himself diametrically opposed to them on matters of principle and philosophy. He conceded that the difficulty probably arose from the fact that the prices he considered fair they considered exorbitant, and went right to the heart of the matter:

> The Canadian Establishment does not care for "vieux papiers souvent scandaleux," and displays a lack of knowledgeable cultural sensibilities. (When I sold the Jacobs papers, the Jewish community of Montreal was almost up in arms over the fact that private papers were offered on an auction block; when I sold the Riel diary I was threatened with injunctions and received menacing phone calls; the same when I offered the Laurier love letters.) I do not blame the federal or provincial governments for their seeming cultural indifference. Politicians are responsible to their electors and they might have difficulties in explaining to them that they paid money for old papers.

Ammann then referred to the Laurier love affair with Madame Lavergne as dealt with by the historian Joseph Schull, and quoted from the editorial in the *Montreal Star* which echoed his views. He described the historian's function as establishing the facts and his as dealer to find a buyer. That no Canadian collector or institution would pay the necessary money reflected on all Canadians.

He expressed delight that McMaster University would spend a reported $520,000 for Bertrand Russell's papers and that the Canadian Government could find a million dollars for a European painting,

> But how irreverent of me to mention in the same breath a Riel diary which the government did not think worth more than $12,000, allowing it to fall to private interests; how absurd of me to mention 344 pages of intimate love

> letters of a French Canadian from Arthabaska for which the Government of Canada could not find even the slightest interest.

He made his point dramatically but unfairly. To say that the papers of a French Canadian from Arthabaska were not worth buying is, in today's fashionable phrase, a racist remark. Did he mean that the government would have thought the papers worth more had they been those of an English Canadian from Toronto? Or perhaps that those of an important European would have produced a different reaction? Nonetheless, Riel's diary should have been worth more than $12,000 to the nation and the Laurier letters more than $5,000.

He was on less sound ground with his contention that the normal manoeuvres of potential buyers to eliminate competitors "create monopolistic situations . . . [and] becomes collusion and is subject to legal investigation and pursuit." As is evident from Dr. Smith's inability to buy the diary at the price he thought right, there were at least two bidders prepared to pay double the price acceptable to the Public Archives.

The essence of Amtmann's case was that archivists and librarians are custodians of the material, historians decide its merits and historical importance, but the determination of financial values ought to rest with the experts, specialist antiquarian dealers in books and manuscripts. To a point, perhaps, but that does not account for the fact that some librarians and archivists also know prices. The idea that institutional buyers have to produce whatever price the dealer thinks appropriate for a given piece sounds fine from the dealers' point of view, but the world doesn't work that way. The one effective control that buyers have in a rising market is the refusal to buy, though they sometimes regret it later, for they know that they should have bought when they didn't or couldn't.

Amtmann finished with a rhapsodic flourish and eloquent tribute to us splendid fellows the dealers: "We are not custodians, nor are we keepers . . . we sold our goods to princes and kings, to Bodleys and Pepys . . . In our hand the material is alive. It becomes a treasured reality, not simply another number on an all but inaccessible shelf. And we sell it, imparting in some measure the fascination of our discovery and the beauty of our adventure. It is not yet dead, but it loses its life in the institutional embrace. But we remember the fragrance of what we have traded away.

A magnificent flight of fancy! Bernard Amtmann, in the spirit of Errol Flynn as Robin Hood versus the Sheriff of Nottingham, the progressive outlaw versus the reactionary establishment figure. He is arguing that the librarian or archivist should buy whatever the bookseller thinks he should buy and pay whatever the bookseller thinks the price should be, and that The Nation should find the money to pay for it. There are flaws in his argument, but he states it well:

> In my view librarians and archivists are by definition custodians of the material in their possession. ... The determining of financial values ought to rest with the experts, specialist antiquarian dealers in books and manuscripts, and with auctioneers. The historical appraisal of material must surely be the responsibility of historians. And the ultimate decision to purchase or not to purchase ... should be left with the executive branch of the department involved. Purchases of special material should not be made dependent on available funds; special funds should be made available for special purchases ...

Thus the dealer finds the rare item, the historian judges its historical importance, the dealer prices it, and the archivist or librarian buys it and looks after it. He also puts a number on it, and places it on an all-but-inaccessible shelf. If it is an item that commands an exceptional price, special funds must be found for it at the discretion of the appropriate department head or, in special cases, the Treasury Board. It has worked something like that for years. This should be qualified by adding that some archivists or librarians are history specialists themselves, and not everything to which a dealer assigns a high price will be thought worth it by those with the responsibility to buy.

The final decision whether or not to buy must rest with the institution. This has meant that ignorance, indifference and inertia can and have been responsible for wrong decisions camouflaged by a wall of institutional platitudes If Arstmann argued wrongly that the custodians should always agree with the dealer, his criticisms were incisive and often valid If some of his shafts went off into the clouds some went to the bull's-eye and occasionally one went into an overstuffed derrière He woke up a lot of people along the way

V

BERNARD AMTMANN enjoyed the theatrical aspects of bookselling, a field that lends itself naturally to the pyrotechnical. He understood instinctively the marketing principle that it is not the steak that sells, it's the sizzle; to the extent that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, an exceptional piece prosaically described becomes as ordinary as its description.

On the other hand, an exceptional piece described in its literary and historical perspective, becomes recognizable for what it is: exceptional, perhaps unique. With a sound, dramatic description, the collector treasures it the more, and will often include the dealer's description in the book when it resides on his shelf. The institutional buyer may not, of course, but then he also stamps books, pastes things in them, throws away dust jackets, and otherwise vandalizes them, much as Vandal is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as a "race that ravaged Gaul, Spain, N. Africa & Rome, destroying many books & works of art &c."

* * *

He had few friends and a limited social life. He liked to entertain and took his guests to the best restaurants. He disdained gossip and had little small talk. His political perspective was that of the social democrat. He discussed international affairs and domestic politics, and he enjoyed sports on television. An occasional quiet dinner and a game of bridge was about the extent of his social life. For all his militant views on matters of public controversy, and his own contributions towards it, he dealt with people in general with an Old World charm and courtesy.

His work was both occupation and vocation. His weekends would include long talks with friendly collectors, out-of-town bookdealers, and visiting librarians. He was always discussing books, asking questions and checking material. Visitors who liked football as well as books could see both with Amtmann on an autumn afternoon. Coffee was always available, and sometimes a little Highland dew or a glass of sherry, for those so inclined, in the late afternoon.

After his mother's death in 1954, Bernard moved to a small flat on Crescent Street. He lived next in the Cantlie Apartments on Sherbrooke Street, just west of Peel, about the time a Quebec intellectual named Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was becoming well-known across Canada, also had an apartment there. He subsequently moved across the street to the more fashionable Le Cartier, then to an apartment on McGregor Street, and later to the opulent Port Royal. After his marriage, the family moved to a handsome house at 39 Thornhill Avenue, Westmount, where they lived for a few years before moving to an apartment in Westmount Square, his last residence.

He kept many of his reference books and much of his best stock at home. As he bought material the choice items were taken home to be worked on at his leisure. He slept less than most people and when he had recent acquisitions or new ideas to expend, he might be found working at home or office at any hour of the night. He was a workaholic, one of that species who find their work so interesting that they are not happy away from it.

When he bought a library there would always be a handful of titles that he had not seen before, that might or might not be in the Union Catalogue. The process would begin: TPL, Gagnon, Casey, Tremaine, Dionne, Sabin, Morgan, Peel, Watters, Wing, or whatever seemed appropriate. He would dive into the histories and the reference books, completely absorbed, talking to himself, drinking coffee, lighting cigarettes, mumbling pensively, the scientist fascinated by the bug.

Amtmann had an instinct for the rare and important. Everything is rare, he said one day, and from his perspective everything was important to the total picture. Pamphlets once common filled dealers' shelves and catalogues for years and then disappeared. A printed item abounds, becomes scarce, and then is never seen. His job was to recognize them and get them into the appropriate collections, to sell them to collectors and institutions. Those who would not act on his recommendations were failing in their responsibilities.

One of his delights was establishing historical significance, relating old material to the issues of the day and finding why it was important. Which libraries had it? Which did not? How many copies were there in the country? How many copies were there anywhere? Finding why an item was important was as much part of the chase as finding it in the first place.

Several of his employees became important dealers in their own right after working for him, among them Warren Baker, Alfred Van Peteghem, and David Ewens. They learned by osmosis, by being there, seeing him in action and listening to him, not by any conscious master-apprentice relationship. He was a kind and generous employer although he could be scathing in his criticism. His staff's main complaint was that he would not let them work on the better material. This, not surprisingly, he kept for himself, and left his staff to the basic business housekeeping, typing the invoices, wrapping and mailing the books, sweeping the floor, making the interminable pots of coffee, and going out for his newspaper and his ever-present cigarettes.

Amtmann delighted in playing little jokes, in testing the gullibility of people. His friends sometimes wondered how many of his quixotic jousts were motivated by principle and how many by a delight in the absurd. His Spartan intellect was tempered by humour, by a sense of mischief. If his customers rejected a book at $500 in his catalogue as too expensive, he would rewrite the description and offer it again at a higher price, and often not only sell it but get a second order, both from buyers who had originally rejected it on grounds of price. In the same vein he agreed to the following prank at one of the auctions.

Mr. A., a regular, had the disconcerting habit of coming in with a bid below the opening bid if that bid drew no response. The house was not against this in all cases; sometimes when an opening price drew no response, Nicholas Fick, the auctioneer, would lower it himself and start again, and the price would take off as the bidding progressed. On the other hand, if Mr. A.'s low bidding was permitted on a regular basis, no opening bid would be taken seriously.

So one day Mr. B., another regular, and Fick arranged to have a little fun. When there was no response to an opening bid and a lower bid was called out by A, a still lower bid was shouted by B. "Sold", announced Fisk, bringing down the hammer and indicating B, to the consternation of A and the confusion of the audience. The bidding proceeded to the next number while B offered to make a deal with A on the item in question. Amtmann watched the drama unfold with his eyes twinkling.

A more important incident illustrates the nature of the man and the peculiarity of the trade. A religious institution in Montreal decided to dispense with its library. They threw out half their books and the following year were about to throw out the rest when the bishop decided to call Amtmann. "I'll give you a thousand dollars for the books sight unseen," said Bernard. More than two hundred cartons were delivered to his office rather than the city dump, and the cheque changed hands. Putting to one side anything that seemed remotely of interest, Bernard filled six cartons out of the more than two hundred.

Of the half dozen exceptional volumes one little book turned out to be the first edition of the first book printed in Montreal, the *Reglement de la Confrerie*, referred to earlier. Only three other copies of this book were known. It sold at the first sale of Montreal Book Auctions Ltd. for $2,500.

A couple of weeks after the cartons were delivered (and a year before the auction sale), another cleric called. Apparently unaware that as many books had been thrown out the previous year, he was outspoken in his condemnation of Amtmann for the low price he had paid. Bernard offered to return almost all the books and they could keep the cheque. The offer was accepted, the second cleric felt he had scored a victory, and the question for Amtmann of what to do with the remaining books was neatly disposed of. Honour was saved all around and everybody was satisfied. Most important, one of the most significant of Canadian books was recognized for what it was, and took its place of honour in the Rare Book Room of McGill University.

Amtmann had a flare for public relations, with individuals as well as with the media, and he was always available to the press. He was an elegant figure with a colourful history, had distinguished white hair, and, on appropriate occasion, wore a pinstripe suit. He always had a quotable remark or analogy, even if clearly rhetorical A bookseller of my type is like a fine vintage — he improves with age

* * *

In the autumn of 1972 at age sixty five Bernard Amtmann surprised his family and friends with the announcement that he intended to marry His fiancée was Airdrie Wilson a Montrealer who had married young and moved to Toronto In 1970 she had divorced and returned to Montreal with her son Beckett Airdrie was a talented illustrator whose work was subsequently published but after her return to Montreal she joined Montreal Book Auctions

Amtmann had wanted John Archer as best man but with typical impetuosity set the wedding date without speaking to Archer only to learn afterward that he would be unable to attend because of a previous unavoidable commitment Bernard then arranged that his brother Willy stand with him Early on the day of the wedding, Bernard had tried to reach Willy in Ottawa but got no answer He was sure Willy was on his way to Montreal, but just in case he asked John Meppus to stand by in case of emergency

The couple were married at the Presbyterian Church of St Andrew and St Paul Bernard followed the proceedings with the greatest of interest, happily accepting the name MacAmtmann for the occasion, as suggested by a friend of Scottish descent

He readily adapted to the major changes in his life required by marriage and step-fatherhood at sixty five He continued to be at work before most people were out of bed and he spent evenings at home with his family He took the first winter holidays of his life enjoying the warmth and sunshine of the West Indies thereby softening the impact of the Montreal winters He was proud of Airdrie s artistic talent and gave her every encouragement She was working on an illustrated children s book which was subsequently published in New York * But it

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The Stars in the Sky A Scottish Tale Retold by Joseph Jacobs Pictures by Airdrie Amtmann (New York Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1979) was his relationship with Beckett that attracted the notice of visitors to the Amtmann home.

Beckett was six years old when his mother remarried. He was a bright, sensitive child, but he had lacked the guidance of a father's affection and authority. There was every opportunity for a clash of wills and a strained relationship. This did not develop, due in the main to Bernard's tact and strength. He enjoyed Beckett's youthful enthusiasms and he led his talents along constructive lines. Shortly after the marriage Beckett assumed his name, and Bernard gave him a desk at his office, with the nameplate "Beckett Amtmann, Vice-President." Bernard's private life in the early years after his marriage was warm and happy, for he felt he was needed and cherished. His affection for Beckett was deep and lasting and he could dream of developing a young mind to accomplish goals that had eluded him. This private world was a haven offering some refuge from his very real troubles in the business world.

* * *

When Bernard broke with Christie's after the auction of September, 1970, it was financially the most critical period of his career. He had arrived in Canada in 1947 at forty years of age, in the prime of his life, and buoyed with the prospects of a new career in a new land. When he split with Christie's he was in his sixties, with heavy responsibilities and burdened with debt. In addition to two active businesses he had family responsibilities. The years were passing and his dreams of a multifaceted success had been shattered.

The book auction business seemed to offer the fastest way back to financial stability and Montreal Book Auctions resumed its sales in December, 1970. His staff was competent and experienced, and Nicholas Fick an able auctioneer. But the auction business to be profitable must have substantial working capital and offer rare and unusual items. Nothing discourages owners from putting up rare material so much as a reputation for delays in payment. It was important to be able to buy fine material from the trade as well as to pay promptly for those sold from consignment. Owners of material sold expected payment

within thirty days of the sale but buyers commonly took sixty and more days to pay, the catalogue's stated conditions of immediate payment notwithstanding.

After each auction there was an anxious period of trying to balance payables and receivables, of getting prompt payment from buyers to satisfy the most persistent of his creditors, as well as to pay salaries, the rent, and the other operating expenses. There was little time and less money to be spent on Bernard Amtmann Inc., the original book business. Its sales declined steadily. Laurie Hill Books had ceased operation.

Bernard Amtmann Inc. no longer attracted an appreciable walk-in trade, as the stock was depleted and not refreshed by new purchases. New material now went to the auction house. Hansi kept the business going, filled mail orders, and worked on other projects as they arose. As the stock deteriorated, there were fewer catalogues and those few were less interesting. Amtmann's old customers regretted the passing of the retail business but he could do nothing about it. He had neither the time nor the energy to revitalize his retail business until he had paid off his debts.

With remarkable tenacity he kept the auction business going while he held off creditors, paying the most persistent and promising eventual payment to the others. He sold his business archives to the University of Montreal in 1972-73 and his bibliographical records to the National Library in 1976. A further influx of cash came when he sold his house on Thornhill Avenue for almost twice what he paid for it a few years earlier. Appraisals continued to be a substantial source of income. He offered shares in the company to a friend who had made him a loan, and in 1974 managed to pay off his major debts.

In early 1974 there came a request from the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan that he accept an honorary Doctorate of Laws. His feigned indifference could not mask the delight with which he accepted the honour. Bernard and Airdrie went to Regina for the convocation on May 24, 1974. He was presented by his old friend, Dr. John H. Archer, Principal of the Regina Campus. The degree was conferred by the Prime Minister of Canada and Chancellor of the University, the Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker.

To be accepted by the academic community in this manner was a splendid experience for one who had been unable to attend high school. There was a wine-and cheese reception in his honour at the Principal's residence where he was greeted by the Premier of Saskatchewan and other luminaries of the university and the province. He was an honoured guest at the Alumni Ball that evening.

The University of Saskatchewan, in conferring this honour, recognized Amtmann's devotion to his adopted country. It acknowledged his indomitable will to find and record the printed and written sources of our national literature. Amtmann appreciated the honour conferred on him and he accepted it with grace and humility.

VI

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1974, the Canadian government announced its intention to enact legislation to prevent the export of books, manuscripts, and works of art of major cultural importance. By the terms of the proposed act, any such item sold in Canada for more than a specified price, originally $1,000, would have to be cleared by a board of experts before an export licence would be issued.

The principle was sound, and the resulting Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board provided the means to achieve the intended purpose. The details evolved from the first proposals and are complex, and an explanation will not be attempted here, but Amtmann opposed the idea from the start, although it presented him with a dilemma. On one hand, the government should protect and encourage the development of Canadian culture; on the other hand, too much government involvement might cross the line between a respectable preservation of national traditions and a chauvinist devotion to indigenous works.

Amtmann was concerned that the resulting government involvement in the sale of books and manuscripts would hamper the flow of material into Canada and discourage purchases by Canadians abroad. The results have shown his fears to be unfounded. The board has functioned well, either helping to find appropriate repositories in Canada for both Canadian and non-Canadian works, or recommending the issuance of an export licence. In those cases where a buyer willing and able to pay a reasonable price could not be found for an important item, the government made available the funds so that the item would remain in Canada.

Amtmann's views were expressed in an article in the July 22, 1975, issue of the *Antiquarian Bookman*, and provoked an enthusiastic letter of support from Mary Benjamin, a leading American autograph dealer. In particular, Miss Benjamin upheld his view that historians, librarians, and archivists were the appropriate authorities to decide on the historical signi-

ficance of material and how it might best be conserved but that the determination of financial values should rest with the specialist antiquarian dealers in the various fields

Members of the Cultural Review Board were appointed by the Secretary of State and Ian Clark of that department held lengthy consultations with experts in the areas affected The administration of the law was modified by recommendations of the professionals and the Antiquarian Bookdealers Association of Canada was given representation on the Board The Act has worked well Fewer national treasures are destroyed as houses are cleaned out The Act has increased interest and encouraged donations More old diaries and old books than ever are being brought to dealers for evaluation

In one sense from the dealers perspective it has worked too well The trade would like to buy much that is donated, but the rich have found that they can often make more money by giving than by selling that is the receipt they get for a cultural property saves them more in income tax than the cash they would have received in a sale to the trade In addition prestige will often result from an important gift and many a beaming so-called donor basks in the publicity accompanying his so-called gift while saving tens of thousands of tax dollars by virtue of his so-called charitable donation

* * *

In his last decade Amtmann's interest in bibliography resulted in the bulk of his publications His major work was published in 1971-73 a four-volume *Contributions to a Short Title Catalogue of Canadiana* It listed the titles he had catalogued over a quarter of a century and contained some 30,000 entries It was modelled on the British *Short-Title Catalogue* with the addition of prices to indicate the direction of the market through the years It was a major contribution with more than 10,000 titles not recorded elsewhere

His other work in the field included his *Contributions to a Dictionary of Canadian Pseudonyms and Anonymous Works Relating to Canada* *Early Canadian Children's Books 1763 1840* *Canadian Children's Books 1841 1867* *Montreal Book*

Auction Records for the years 1967–1978, subsequently continued by Craig Fraser for the years of Canada Book Auctions 1979–1982, but omitting the last sale of March 1983. He had started others before he became ill in 1978. (See Appendix B for a list of his publications.)

Amtmann had no formal training or experience in bibliography. What he did have, and it served him well, was his boundless energy and enthusiasm. He broke new ground in several directions, but his efforts were amateurish. His *Short-Title Catalogue* was important. His works on pseudonyms and children's books were useful contributions but no more. Michel Theriault reviewed the two children's books for *Phaedrus*, vol. 7, no. 2/3, Winter 1980, p. 33. He made the best of it, as he did not want to appear critical of a deceased friend, but he pointed out several shortcomings, and asked a question which he then answered:

> How many specialists in children's literature did Bernard consult? I know from having discussed it with him that he avoided most of them and argued with the others. Bernard was a maverick and somewhat of an 'agent provocateur'; most people were afraid of him, a few of us loved him for it. But he was not always right . . . In the case of these bibliographies he made a mistake.

Thériault pointed out that he confused books for children with books for young people, and that he did not adequately define his objective. He regretted that Amtmann did not concentrate on the fields he knew best, but added that there were titles included which were not found elsewhere and that his work would be helpful in the preparation of a better bibliography in the future.

One of Amtmann's ambitions was to participate in a national bibliography of Canadiana, even to be in charge of it. In the mid-1970s the national bibliography was constantly on his mind. He considered it the obvious monument for the centennial of Confederation. He was aware that the National Library was planning retrospective bibliographies going back to 1534, the year the Cartier's voyage up the St. Lawrence

He knew that one major problem would be the bibliographers' obsession with perfection which led many of them to believe that if a bibliography was not complete it was worthless, and his hope was to compensate for this worthy if impossible ideal with a plan which was simplicity itself. He would start with a listing of 100,000 titles, to be published in six volumes, folio. The basic six-volume set would be supplemented by additional annual publications. The point of departure would be what was now available for listing. Gaps would be filled as additional information became available. In a couple of decades we would have a comprehensive inventory of our books, pamphlets and printed ephemeras.

Amtmann was aware that it would be difficult for the National Library to accept his ideas, indeed to have him involved with the project in any capacity. Such an undertaking fell within the responsibility of the National Library as set out by statute. Dr. Guy Sylvestre, the National Librarian, tactfully did not dismiss his idea out of hand. There was a sympathetic exchange of views, but the National Library had its mandate and was carrying it out as thoroughly and forthrightly as time and funds permitted.

If Amtmann's project was to go forward it must do so outside the National Library and on its own resources. He approached several foundations and received many expressions of support but not the financial backing he required. He was disappointed but not discouraged; he felt he had made a sound proposal and had been taken seriously. The opportunity would arise again.

Amtmann enjoyed much of the process of revitalization going on in Quebec. He supported the liberation of the spirit that fired the Quiet Revolution. He sympathized with and encouraged the young artists and writers who poured out their hearts and souls in expressions of life and energy. He could not condone the excesses that all rapid changes engender, but the youthful enthusiasm of the times found a match in his own.

He did not approve of the removal of literary manuscripts from the Bibliotheque nationale to the Archives nationales, as was done by the Quebec Government, thus precipitating the resignation of the head of the Library. Amtmann wrote a letter in his support and critical of the government which appeared in the *Montreal Star* February 3 1973

His last public brawl occurred in 1977 and included many of the recurring themes that had enlivened his years in the auction business He was offered the letters and personal papers of Sir James Robert Gowan an Irishman who had come to Canada in 1832 and he settled in Upper Canada on land which was to become Peel County Gowan was a prominent Orangeman sat for forty years on the Bench of Ontario and was one of the commissioners appointed in 1873 to investigate the Pacific Scandal In the later years of a long career he was a member of the Canadian Senate

His papers included some 2 500 letters many from prominent people including eighty one by Sir John A Macdonald These provoked considerable publicity and were featured in three auction catalogues in the first half of 1977 inviting bids and expressions of interest from institutions and private collectors The one firm offer came from the Ontario Archives for $25 000 one tenth of Amtmann's appraisal and was rejected with the disdain he thought it merited

It also inspired Amtmann's quintessential polemic, which he had printed in a small edition of about 200 copies without a limitation statement and handed out to a select group of recipients at the Toronto Book Fair in May 1977 It also appeared in full in the catalogue for the next auction no 102 June 29 1977 The pamphlet is the most dramatic of his publications and one of two that are already scarce it is entitled *A Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity* He saw the problem as part of the recurring pattern

> We re-encounter the strange and remarkably familiar phenomena of an almost complete absence of interest among institutions universities collectors and the general public ... Historical collections of the magnitude of the Gowan Papers are to be considered distinctive national treasures and private collectors and institutions feel that they belong in national institutions of an archival character either provincial or federal But national archival institutions are faced with the dilemma that they already

> have too much of the same type of material, and that their budgets are very much restricted. For this reason the financial evaluation of the professional archivist differs greatly from that of the professional dealer or auctioneer. If it may be assumed that manuscripts and letters have ideological as well as research value, overly under the influence of the academic, the archivist is mainly concerned with the research value, and his conception of the financial value is coloured by the consideration of how much the material will contribute to research.

A curious blend of dialectic, syllogistic logic, and debating technique make up the argument, which is further distended by his special verbosity. What is clearly wrong is his remark that there is an absence of interest. Many institutions and many collectors would be delighted to have them. But not for $250,000.

As Amtmann goes on to say, putting it in other words, if the Public Archives already have several thousand letters by Sir John A. Macdonald, and large quantities of letters by the other prominent correspondents of Sir James Gowan, these are not worth a lot of money to them. Except for the occasional letter of special importance, the unit value of his lot is much less to the Public Archives than to an individual collector. And for a collector to consider spending such an amount he must consider how else the amount might be spent and he will probably come to the conclusion that it could be better spent elsewhere. The problem is not a lack of interest. The problem is $250,000.

Amtmann went on to note that there was an active market for fine old houses, furniture and antiques, paintings, medals, Eskimo sculptures, and such. There was also a strong market for the papers of Canadian poets, for the papers of Bertrand Russell, and generous support for the Disraeli Project at Queen's University. Why not similar funds for letters by Sir John A. Macdonald? He favoured the acquisition of old masters by the National Gallery, of all material that would enrich the cultural and intellectual life of the nation. Why, then, was money not forthcoming for the Gowan Papers which were clearly national treasures? Laws prohibiting export do not encourage people to give them to libraries and archives.

Indeed, he argued, no satisfactory mechanism exists to encourage such donations. Many archivists and librarians feel that public spirited citizens have a responsibility to donate such treasures. Others will pay high prices for some acquisitions while still others deplore both high prices and important material leaving the country. Few will make any effort to ensure that collections offered for sale receive a fair market value.

The government gives the National Gallery a reasonably free hand because there is an established art market to determine fair value. At this time in Canada, there was neither a sufficient market nor experience in the market to establish a fair price for the Gowan Papers. Amtmann understood this but found it unsatisfactory. He had his own answer. He argued that he had attempted to foster a sense of pride in the Canadian heritage by his "Open Letter to Canadian Archivists", by representing the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association in discussions with officials from the Department of the Secretary of State on the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, and by participating in the orientation seminar arranged by the National Archival Appraisal Board. While this last was particularly useful for mutual understanding between the trade and the institutions, it provided no criteria which might be useful in establishing a fair market value.

> In the case of the Gowan Papers no market exists and therefore it is not possible to establish a fair market value. Nobody will deny that the Gowan Papers have value in the context of Canadian heritage. No one will suggest that the owner discard the material. No one will suggest that due to the absence of a market the owner has to accept any price offered. . . . If the owner wishes to discard and to destroy the material, this is his decision; if he desires to sell it, this is his right and he has the right to expect a fair price!
>
> It is my business to evaluate and estimate books, pamphlets, manuscripts and letters, and it is my considered opinion that $250 000 is a fair and realistic appraisal. . . . It does not take into consideration that every single item is unique, that many of the items have special importance

> and that the sum total of all this is a splendid manifestation of real national heritage for Canada and Canadians. The fact that no Canadian market for the Gowan Papers exists (at his price) ... proves very clearly that Canadians are essentially uninterested in the history of their country and are singularly endowed with apathetic feelings of national pride. ... As long as materials of the nature of the Gowan Papers are not appreciated and are neglected by Canadians, the search for a Canadian identity will go on. It is not the governments and the institutions that are to blame; it is the Canadian intelligentsia which is at fault. It is not what is called the Canadian Establishment, the bankers, the brewers, the merchants, the rich and the powerful, who are at fault, but another establishment, more powerful and more insidious that has created this situation. Indeed, it is the ongoing conspiracy of the Canadian academic establishment that has retarded and delayed the discovery of the Canadian identity. The banker, the brewer, the lumber merchant can do much, but they cannot give the country a soul and an identity. The journalist, the poet, the writer, the professor, the librarian, the archivist can. ... We need to build shrines for the men who made this country. ... The sorry spectacle that no serious offer is forthcoming, that no market exists for a collection like the Gowan Papers, will one day be a thing of the past. In rejecting 2,500 letters written by Sir John A. Macdonald and his contemporaries, we reject our heritage and we reject our identity.

This is dialectic carried to the point of sophistry extended to the point of absurdity. He is restating with pyrotechnical eloquence his old contention that unless people pay what he thinks they should pay for one item of the enormous number that comprise Canadian cultural history, they have no interest in their history. This is simply not so. Also, he widened his target to include the academics, and he would probably find some support for this among the more nationalist of them. Others might argue that there is a Canadian identity, and that it is well known to the citizens of Moose Jaw, Trois Pistoles, and Orangeville

The sad thing is that the academics and the journalists have not yet discovered it, for it doesn't sit well with their preconceptions.

How much of his extravagant argument is deliberate exaggeration to make his point, and how much of it results from his being carried away by the joy of battle, is hard to say, but he tended to get people thinking constructively if only in self-defence. He continued the argument with declining intensity through the summer and into the autumn, in conversation, by correspondence, and in the auction catalogues. There he let the matter rest. For the next year he appeared wholly taken up with preparing and administering the auctions. He spent more time at home with his family. He was approaching his last months.

He was living off his reserves of energy. In 1978 he confided to a friend that he had a heart murmur and was supposed to cut down on cigarettes. Towards the end of 1978 he was struck down by a heart attack. He lingered for some days, appeared to rally, but then gradually weakened. He died in the Montreal General Hospital on January 9, 1979.

* * *

Bernard Amtmann would have been pleased and perhaps a little surprised at the warmth of the tributes which poured in after his death. Collectors, librarians, archivists, and bookmen in general, from Canada, the United States, and Britain expressed their regret at his passing and gratitude for his contribution to the vitality of their world. Leading professional journals and general periodicals equally paid tribute. He had a remarkable talent for retaining the friendship and respect of many with whom he had continuing disagreements.

He arrived in this country in 1947 to begin a new life, knowing few people and with few assets and almost no money. At his death, thirty-two years later, he was considered by many to have had no peer as an authority on Canadiana.

He was in the antiquarian book business in Canada for all of these thirty-two years, selling books, pamphlets, maps, manuscripts, and printed ephemera. For the first twenty years he operated a regular retail business, and then opened an auction

house which increasingly became his main base. He was largely self-educated and had a devotion to scholarship that earned him respect throughout the trade, the libraries, and the universities. He encouraged the bookdealers to work in their joint interest towards common goals. The young members of the ABAC in particular remember the help and encouragement he provided in their early years in the trade. He was quick to protest government interference in fields he thought better left to individuals. He repeatedly warned of the growing presence of Big Brother in the affairs of ordinary people.

Bernard had a deep feeling of gratitude toward his adopted country. He delighted in its lack of conformity and its open society. His polemics concerning the search for identity were genuine and, if he never fully understood the Canadian ethos, he understood it as well as the native-born who have argued the subject for more than a century.

Bernard Amtmann came from a culture that had been developing for hundreds of years. He came to a culture that still reflected the physical task of subduing a wilderness. He assumed the role of a gadfly, perhaps too easily seeming to create controversy for its own sake. If his self-appointed role of making Canadians more aware of their history and its artifacts was repetitive and idealistic, it was genuine and it went a long way toward achieving its purpose. He brought a new awareness to the field and a new respectability to dealing in it.

Away from business he was a very private person. His brother and sister remember him as a young man on social occasions being charming but reserved. He was strong-willed, enterprising, and creative, sure of his ability to compete and win. He was a delightful host and a gentle parent. He gained the respect of his adopted son Beckett and was at once parent, companion, mentor, and friend to the boy.

Bernard Amtmann is remembered with respect and affection. At the Annual Meeting of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of Canada, in Toronto on May 14, 1979, the following resolution was adopted: "That A.B.A.C. sponsor an Amtmann Circle to commemorate the memory of our founding president, Bernard Amtmann." Membership in the Circle was open to all who shared his objectives and aspirations. The object

of the Circle was to commemorate Bernard Amtmann's name by sponsoring scholarly projects in his fields of interest: bibliography, Canadian history, bookselling, and book collecting. The Steering Committee suggested as an early project the production of a short biography and an outline of his work.

This brief memoir is intended to serve that purpose: a not uncritical tribute to a notable bookseller, a devoted scholar, and a respected friend.

Epilogue

IN JUNE 1984 John Archer gave an informal talk to the Amtmann Circle, meeting in Massey College in the University of Toronto. It was appropriate for him to speak; he had been closer to Bernard Amtmann than any other man since Bernard arrived in Canada.

Archer ascribed Amtmann's great strength as a dealer to his all-embracing view of Canadiana, his emphasis on the importance of ephemera: the railway manuals, schedules of canal barges, flyers for sports days, sermons, menus, and university lectures, all of which found a place in his catalogues. He thought Amtmann's greatest accomplishment was his *Short-Title Catalogue*, which listed many thousands of titles not recorded elsewhere.

Perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Amtmann, Dr Archer continued, was being asked by the Library of Congress in Washington to be their agent in building such a collection, but he declined, not wanting to be responsible for shipping so much unique material out of the country. He had hoped that one day the Public Archives of Canada might ask him to collect for them.

Amtmann's first contact with Canadians had been during the war. He had been impressed by the Canadian troops he encountered, and he and Archer had shared the special common ground of both having been members of commando units and surviving the rigours of hand-to-hand combat. He thought Canada the freest country in the world, and was surprised in due course to learn how few Canadians realized it.

His own nature was European rather than British, and he thought France led the world in the finer things of life. He respected the German contribution to literature and music, and the British tradition of fair play and sound laws, the ultimate freedom being from the heavy hand of government.

Amtmann never understood the English establishment in Canada, and the failure of many English Canadians to take advantage of and profit from the French fact. He sympathized

with those fostering the Quiet Revolution in Quebec who along with the leaders of the Prairie Provinces struggled against the corporate interests of Eastern Canada.

He dubbed the archivists the undertakers of Canadian culture. The Public Archives came in for special criticism, in spite of having earned a distinguished reputation as one of the foremost public archival institutions in North America, in spite of not having special funds for acquisitions, and in spite of a Canadian tradition of donations to Canadian archives. The Public Archives were a continuing target of this newly-arrived apostle of Canadian culture.

Archer found Amtmann's thesis somewhat undermined by public knowledge that criticism of those who did not buy at his auctions and who criticized his pricing, was criticism of those who did not do as much business with him as he would have wished. He added that librarians are traditionally buyers from catalogues more than at auctions, perhaps inevitable in a country as vast as Canada. By 1970, Amtmann had almost deserted the second-hand book catalogue field in favour of auctions. 'What was surprising in all this is that Bernard remained friends with many of the archivists in spite of his criticisms, and certainly the National Library never broke off relations.' Archer concluded with an interesting analogy:

> I have often thought that Bernard's bridge game was a microcosm of his day-to-day exchanges. He had intuitive card sense but ignored the conventions. If a hand pleased him he would bid it to the limit and beyond. If he wasn't happy with his hand he would pass in the face of a demand bid. He was an egotist and sometimes brilliant; he was no follower, no patient plowman but a flashing meteor. And he usually lost! And he was a gracious loser, once the game was over.

* * *

Again, this is not biography but personal recollections supported by a few facts. There is much we do not know about Bernard Amtmann and a few things we have omitted because we thought Bernard would have preferred them to be left out.

In this vein we have avoided the story of the thief who stole two books from an important library. He sold them to Amtmann, who returned them to the library with his compliments, before the loss had been discovered. In another instance he put a leading Canadian writer in contact with an institutional buyer of literary manuscripts, and sued when he was not paid what he considered an adequate fee for the resulting sale. Another institution still has not paid his bill for a valuation which they thought too high. In both cases he refused to reduce his fee and was paid nothing.

Appendix A

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE LIFE OF BERNARD AMTMANN

1907 Born July 11 in Vienna Austria

1913 Started School, attended for eight years leaving at 14

1914 18 First World War which ended with Austria among the defeated nations

1919-20 Amtmann children among those sent abroad to escape the near starvation conditions of post-war Vienna

1921 End of formal education BA s first job as a bank messenger

1920s Various clerical jobs

1930s In the early 30s, various business ventures with indifferent success In later 30s became established in photographic business

1934 New Austrian constitution modelled on the German Chancellor Dollfuss shot by Nazi Stormtroopers

1938 Germans occupy Austria BA leaves goes to France and joins army

1939 Outbreak of Second World War

1940 Germans conquer Norway Denmark Holland Belgium and France BA and his parents settle at Montauban in unoccupied France he works at manual jobs as a labourer gardener laundryman dishwasher hotel waiter and others He joins the French underground, becomes head of a commando unit engaged in sabotage

1944 After Allied invasion of Europe and the liberation of France BA returns to the French Army with the rank of sergeant

1945 Germany surrendered in May and Japan in August The next two years BA again works at odd jobs but now buys and sells books as well

1947 In October BA and his mother arrive in Ottawa as landed immigrants Within days he is buying and selling books

1948 He issues his first catalogue the first of sixteen issued in his three years in Ottawa

1950 BA and his mother move to Montreal in early November

1951 He opens a shop on Greene Avenue, Westmount in May A decade of developing the business and making a reputation

1954 BA becomes a Canadian citizen

1960 BA incorporates as Bernard Amtmann, Inc. He also establishes Laurie Hill Ltd

1966 Antiquarian Booksellers Association of Canada is organized, with Bernard Amtmann as first president At the annual meeting of the Canadian Library Association in Calgary, BA presents his plan for compiling and publishing a Canadian National Bibliography

1967 BA establishes Montreal Book Auctions, with the first sale at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal April 26 1967

1968 Arranges a joint venture with Christie Manson & Woods of London England sales run from April 1969, to September 1970 Montreal Book Auctions resume sales in December 1970

1970 Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts

1971-73 The publication of BA s *Short-Title Catalogue* with some 30 000 titles including 10 000 not recorded elsewhere

1972 Marries Airdrie Wilson of Montreal

1972-73 Sale of the Bernard Amtmann Inc s business records to the University of Montreal

1974 Awarded the degree of Honorary Doctor of Laws by the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan

1976 Sale of his bibliographical archives to the National Library

1977 The Gowan Papers episode

1978-79 Bernard Amtmann s last year and final illness ending with his death January 9 1979

Appendix B

LIST OF BERNARD AMTMANN'S PUBLICATIONS AS AUTHOR, COMPILER OR PUBLISHER

Bibliography of Canadian Children's Books and Books for Young People 1841–1867. Livres de l'enfance & livres de la jeunesse du Canada 1841–1867. Montreal, 1977.

Canadian Art Auction Record. [Vol. I] 1969. Compiled by H. C. Campbell, Chief Librarian, Toronto Public Libraries. Willowdale, Ont.: Canadian Antiques and Fine Arts, [1970]. Volumes I and II were published by this company in Willowdale and Toronto respectively; volumes III to VI were published in Montreal by Bernard Amtmann Inc.

[do.] [Vol. II], 1970. Toronto, [1971].

[do.] Vol. III, 1971. Montreal: Bernard Amtmann, Inc., 1973.

[do.] Vol. IV, 1972. Montreal, 1973.

[do.] Vol. V, 1973. Montreal, 1974.

[do.] Vol. VI, 1974. Montreal, 1975.

Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity. Montreal, 1977. 12p. About 200 copies printed, without limitation statement. Plain blue wrapper, tied with a gold cord. Reprinted in Montreal Book Auctions catalogue 102, June, 1977.

Contributions to a Dictionary of Canadian Pseudonyms and Anonymous Works relating to Canada. Contributions à un dictionnaire des pseudonymes canadiens et des ouvrages anonymes relatifs au Canada. Montreal, 1973.

Contributions to a Short-Title Catalogue of Canadiana. Mont-

real 1971 73 4 vols or 5 vols interleaved Bound in maroon buckram

Early Canadian Children s Books 1763 1840 A bibliographical investigation into the nature and extent of early Canadian children s books and books for young people Livres de l enfance & livres de la jeunesse au Canada 1763 1840 Etude bibliographique Montreal 1976 Illustrated title pages reproduced

Montreal Book Auction Records 1967-1971 Montreal, 1972

[do] Vol ii 1972 Montreal 1973

[do] Vol iii 1973 1974 Montreal, 1976

[do] Vol iv 1975 76 Montreal 1978

[do] Vol v, 1977 1978 Montreal 1979 Volumes vi to viii were published by the successor firm Canada Book Auctions bringing the auction records up to 1982 Volume vii is cumulative for the years 1967 1980 and volume viii records 1981 82 It omits the sale of March, 1983

Montreal Book Auctions L Encan des livres de Montreal Some highlights of the season 1970-71 Quelques prix remarquables Montreal 1971 [8]p Promotional pamphlet for the coming season with subscription form slipped in

The North-West Passage A poem by George Stovin Venables Ottawa 1950 12p Card cover in one of two colours off white or pale blue Facsimile reprint of the poem which won the Chancellor s Medal at Cambridge University in 1831 An edition of 100 copies

Riel Diary [prospectus] Montreal, 1971 [8]p

Abacus Published in Montreal fourteen numbers appeared irregularly from July 1967 to late 1970 or 1971 Written by

Amtmann to continue discussions raised at meetings of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of Canada the first four letters being an acronym He was assisted by William Morley and others

Canadian Notes & Queries Questions et reponses canadiennes first appeared as a supplement to *Abacus* in September 1969 and has continued more or less regularly to the present day number 36 appearing in the fall of 1986 Amtmann published the first 10 issues to June 1974 after which it was financed by other dealers notably Alfred Van Peteghem of Montreal and John Wray of Alliston Ontario Most of the editorial work has been done over the years by William Morley with the assistance of associate editors most recently Michel Theriault and Barbara Testero

Erasmus Circle Bulletin of Montreal Le Cercle Erasme de Montréal Three numbers were published the first in November 1970 and two in 1971

Bernard Amtmann Inc and Montreal Book Auctions issued approximately four hundred lists and catalogues from 1948 to 1979 Amtmann often wrote long notes in his catalogues on bibliographical and other subjects For example three of his first four catalogues nos 2 3 and 4 issued from Ottawa in 1950 include a lengthy entry on his first Canadian object of scrutiny the French soldier and administrator Le Potherie His letters to the editor appeared in several newspapers and journals

The Bernard Amtmann papers in the Literary Manuscripts Collection of the National Library of Canada in particular Unit II Bibliographer Publisher and Publicist include notes towards several bibliographies which he did not complete and a series called Projects Schemes and Controversies which together show the extent of his thoughts and the variety of his interests

We conclude this list with Willy Amtmann's book on the history of music in Canada It is here because of Bernard's

significant albeit small role, and also because of the book's intrinsic importance.

Amtmann, Willy. *Music in Canada 1600-1800*. Montreal: Habitex Books, 1975. 320p. Published in an edition of about 600 copies.

[do.] *La musique au Québec 1600-1875*. Traduction de Michelle Pharand. Montreal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1976. 420p. Illustrated by eight coloured plates and eighty illustrations in black and white. The French edition adds a hundred pages and extensive illustrations, and includes a section on music in Quebec in the nineteenth century. It was published in an edition of just over 6 000 copies. Both editions are now scarce.

Willy Amtmann received his degree of Bachelor of Music from the University of Toronto, Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York, and his Doctorate in Musicology from the University of Strasbourg, France. He taught at Carleton University in Ottawa from 1968 until his retirement in 1976; his courses included the first in the history of music in Canada given at a Canadian university.

Appendix C

MONTREAL BOOK AUCTIONS / CANADA BOOK AUCTIONS

The company known variously as Montreal Book Auctions / Christie's (Canada) with Montreal Book Auctions / Canada Book Auctions, held 149 sales [really 152 sales, as is shown below], from April, 1967, to March, 1983, as follows:

Montreal Book Auctions: sales 1 to 6, April, 1967, to November, 1968.

Christie's (Canada) with Montreal Book Auctions held sales from April, 1969, to September, 1970. The numbering is muddled by the fact that there are fewer sales than catalogues, and also by the fact that they began the numbers again at 1 and there was no sale or catalogue 13. The sequence of sales is as follows: 1, 2, 3 part one, 3 part two, 4 part one, 4 part two, 5 part one, 5 part two, 6 part one, 6 part two, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 (with two catalogues differing only in the colours of their covers, some are green and some are white), and 17. The last sale was held on September 28, 1970. A further complication results from the fact that the catalogues for the art sales were usually unnumbered. Sales 9, 11, 14, and 17 were art auctions.

Montreal Book Auctions resumed with sale 18, on December, 1970, and continued to May, 1979. The last two sales were held after Bernard Amtmann's death: they are numbers 119 and 120, held morning and afternoon on May 23, 1979.

The auction house was then purchased by a group headed by Craig Fraser, an old friend of Amtmann's and the proprietor of Specialty Book Concern. It was moved to Toronto and held its first sale in October, 1979, under the name, Canada Book Auctions.

Canada Book Auctions held twenty-three sales numbers 121 to 143 October 1979 to March 1983 The company was disbanded in 1983 after having paid off all its creditors

All sales of the three companies were held in either Montreal or Toronto (including sale 47 held in Toronto April 28 1973) with the exceptions of sales 11 and 17 held April 30 1970 and September 28 1970 in Ottawa and Calgary respectively

A Note on the Authors

Both were longtime friends of Bernard Amtmann, John Archer being his closest friend for the last three decades of his life. They were both admirers, but each had enough differences of opinion with him over the years to be convinced that his admiration was not uncritical.

After a distinguished career as historian, archivist, and librarian, Dr. John Archer retired as President of the University of Regina, which he still serves as Professor Emeritus. John Mappin left a family business twenty years ago to become an antiquarian bookdealer.

Archer was Chief Librarian at the McLennan Library of McGill University and Mappin was Chairman of the Board of the Westmount Public Library, Montreal, for many years. Both have built collections, bought and sold rare books and are regularly consulted as evaluators of books, manuscripts, and printed ephemera. Both have been members of the National Archives Appraisal Board since its formation. They met as dinner guests of Bernard Amtmann.

This *Personal Memoir* has been printed in an edition of
five hundred. Copies 1 to 100 are in boards and signed
by the authors. 101 to 500 are in printed wrappers

This is Number 63

John [illegible]

BERNARD AMTMANN

MAFFIN / ARCHER

AMTMANN CIRCLE

Library
of the
University of Toronto

Bernard Amtmann
1907–1979

Bernard Amtmann in the early 1970s

BERNARD AMTMANN
1907 - 1979
A PERSONAL MEMOIR

by John Mappin and John Archer

John Mappin
John Archer O.C.

Amtmann Circle Publication for 1986
1987

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Published by The Amtmann Circle

The frontispiece photograph of Bernard Amtmann is reproduced from the original in the Bernard Amtmann papers, Literary Manuscripts Collection, by courtesy of the National Library of Canada.

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BERNARD AMTMANN's early catalogues were more influential than any other single source in raising Canadiana from the level of the dusty five- and ten-cent shelf to the respected realm of antiquarian books. Though his encouragement and counsel were unstinting, one could always be assured of his frankness, even if his comments had to be unflattering, and I think his candour may have lost him some friendships, though I suspect only amongst those who confused amity with flattery. I think perhaps librarians were the longest suffering of his victims, and however warranted his detracting judgements might be, it was sometimes difficult to recognize the justice contained within the insult! Life for those within the charmed circle of Bernard's influence was never dull.

Wm F E Morley

Introduction

THIS IS NOT AN ATTEMPT at formal biography. It is the recollections of friends who admired Bernard Amtmann, and who wanted something of the man to be recorded for the future. We have tried to describe the Amtmann we knew, the man, his character, his talents, and his foibles. We have noted his strengths and weaknesses as we saw them, along with his enthusiasms and his bêtes noires. We have included a few facts for the record. The appendices offer a chronology of his life and work, of his publications, and of the auction house.

Above all, this is not an attempt at scholarship. We shudder at the thought that anyone should mistake it for a critical biography. If those who knew him think the work adequate, it will have served its purpose.

Bernard Amtmann lived thirty-two years in this country, arriving after the Second World War. He belonged to neither of what used to be called the Two Solitudes. He could live comfortably with either, although his background led him more naturally to French Canada. He could be critical of both, in particular of the criticisms that each had of the other.

He was fascinated by Canada and its untapped resources, as much historical and intellectual as mineral and hydro-electric. He plunged into Canadian history within weeks of his arrival, and with many of his new compatriots worked to reveal one of the more dramatic of national histories. He analysed and dissected the material that passed through his hands, much as a scientist does that which passes under his microscope. He told others about it and what it should mean to them, and was clearly annoyed when they did not share his views.

He was creative, imaginative and intuitive, warm, charming, and generous. He was cantankerous, stubborn, and bellicose, and he faced criticism as one who has been inoculated faces disease: with an attitude of imperturbable superiority. His life was his work, and his work was dealing with the materials of Canadian history: finding, studying, contemplating, buying, selling, and evaluating.

We contend that, for more than thirty years, Bernard Amtmann made a significant contribution to the discovering and understanding of Canadian historical resources. That was why the idea came to Craig Fraser of creating the Amtmann Circle in his name. It is also the reason for this book.

I

IN NOVEMBER, 1973, a book auction in Montreal included several items of exceptional interest, the most dramatic being some unpublished poems of Louis Riel. The Montreal *Gazette* had a feature article on Bernard Amtmann and his auction house, Montreal Book Auctions Ltd. The article included a brief history of the firm, and had a few lines about Amtmann, adding that he combined some of the essential talents of Socrates and Elmer Gantry. Amtmann read the article and, turning to a man examining the material, asked him, 'Who is Elmer Gantry?' The answer referred him to Sinclair Lewis and American hot-gospelling of the 1920s. Amtmann looked puzzled for a moment, and then brightened, 'You mean the character played by Burt Lancaster in the movie?' An affirmative nod. 'Good! Good!', beamed Amtmann, delighted.

* * *

Bernard Amtmann was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1907. He left school at fourteen to go to work, and throughout the 1920s held a number of clerical jobs. He soon acquired the knowledge and the mental agility to survive. His little subsequent formal education was gained through evening courses at the university, where the students were encouraged to participate. Young Bernard did so with the enthusiasm that was to remain with him all his life, talking more than all the other students combined. One of his professors became a major influence in his formative years, and Bernard discussed and argued with him during the evening classes and after. One night, Bernard walked the professor home continuing the discussion. They went right by the door, walking and talking through the night, ending only with the dawn.

He tried his hand at a number of entrepreneurial ventures in the depression years of the 1930s, with indifferent results. One was photography, where his ingenuity came up with a promising new process, but before it could become profitable the spectre of Nazism covered Europe. He left Vienna in 1938, on the day the German army arrived, he got his family out shortly after, and, with his mother and father, settled in France. He joined the French army and was stationed with his regiment in northern France. In the Spring of 1940, the German Blitzkrieg rolled over Holland and Belgium and into France. His regiment was overrun and its remnants swept south, with the masses of refugees fleeing the Germans. His parents, at first in Paris, also went south. Somehow, son and parents got together and found refuge in Montauban. There he worked at various menial jobs and joined the French underground army.

After the war, Amtmann worked for a couple of years in France and then emigrated to Canada. Before leaving France, he did a little buying and selling of old books. He arrived in Ottawa in the autumn of 1947, with two suitcases of books and a few dollars in cash, and in a matter of days was in the antiquarian book business. He soon realized that his future lay in Canadian books and his study of Canadian history started immediately.

The following year he issued his first catalogues. At the start they supplied an abundance of scholarly information, which helped establish him with the rare book librarians, who found them a delight to read and informative as well. The detailed descriptions tended to disappear after the early catalogues. They reappeared to some extent when rare material was catalogued though most of the rarities were sold to private collectors or librarians who visited his shop, or by telephone. Such descriptions were to reappear regularly when he started to produce the auction catalogues. In 1950, his imprint appeared for the first time, on his edition of *The North-West Passage*, a poem by G. S. Venables, which had won the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge in 1831. Also in 1950 he moved to Montreal, and carried on his business in a small store on Greene Avenue, living on the same street above Sherbrooke, where it became Mount Pleasant Avenue. Later, his business was carried on from three different Sherbrooke Street West addresses: 750, at the corner of Victoria Street; then 1176, at the corner of Stanley, and lastly at 1529, just east of Côte des Neiges.

As an adopted rather than a native son, he brought the passion of the convert to his field. His knowledge of German,

French, and English gave him unusual access to material, and he recognized the significance of much that left others unmoved. He worked with a sense of drama, of discovery, of excitement, as he established the importance of pamphlets and printed ephemera. He rejected the alternatives of either ignoring Canadian history or being obsessed by it. His interest was pan-Canadian, not localized to one region, nor restricted to one aspect or language. His disdain for the parochial perspective was evident in discussion, and he argued that our history and the men who made it were uniquely fascinating. In a remarkably short time he acquired an extensive working knowledge, and, equally important, he learned how to establish facts and check references.

His independent spirit led to his later problems with some librarians and archivists. He could not understand the need for meetings and budgets and buying by committee. In his view the nature of bureaucratic structure was such that it filtered original thought from an enquiring mind until it was unable to think beyond institutional platitudes. He had contempt for small indigenous minds which did not understand or appreciate the immense heritage that was ours, the national self-denigrators happy to defer to the Old World or the United States.

Amtmann took people seriously. He asked pointed questions. He wished to discover early the aptitude of those he dealt with, whether a new acquaintance had that spark of originality that was his own dominant characteristic. He argued that the Canadian antiquarian book trade should become more professional, because it was to the dealers' mutual benefit to do so. By the early 1960s he had become convinced of the need for a trade association, and in time he convinced the more important of his colleagues. The result was the formation of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada, which held its first annual meeting in Ottawa in 1967. To encourage the exchange of ideas which the ABAC had started, he published *Abacus* and the first ten numbers of *Canadian Notes & Queries*, working with William Morley, then Curator of Special Collections at Queen's University. (For details, see Appendix B.)

People entering the trade found him a generous and helpful colleague. His knowledge and reference library were at their

disposal, he answered questions about material, he gave advice on pricing, he sold them good material cheap, and even made his mailing list available to newcomers preparing their first catalogues. He never talked down to the young nor patronized them. When the film *Mary Poppins* won a large number of young hearts, Amtmann met on the street one day a friend with an eight-year old daughter. The friend, with ceremony, introduced the two, adding for his daughter's benefit, 'Mr Amtmann is an expert on books, Jane. If you have a question about any book, I'm sure he'd be happy to answer it.' Back came an enthusiastic question about Mary Poppins, provoking a delighted reply from the expert. The answer was informative and equally enthusiastic. It avoided details but included suggestions as to how further information might be had. A question about a book from an interested person had been treated with the respect it deserved.

During a career of thirty-two years, Amtmann issued about 400 lists and catalogues, some 280 through Bernard Amtmann Inc., and 120 from Montreal Book Auctions. In addition, he published nineteen volumes as author, compiler, or publisher, several articles in his catalogues, others in periodicals, and many letters to the editor. His great ambition was to be in charge of a national bibliography.

Amtmann could be vitriolic and sometimes unfair, but his annoyance was often well founded. Once, at a Toronto Book Fair in the mid-1970s, the acquisitions librarian of one of the wealthiest libraries in the country stopped at his booth and said, with a look of accomplishment on her face, that she had toured the entire fair and had managed to resist buying a single book. This woman, responsible for the development of an important collection, considered it a triumph to tour the booths of seventy-five leading dealers and to buy nothing, a sense of accomplishment embellished by a beaming self-satisfaction. To Amtmann, this was the negative outlook of too many librarians refined to its essence. It was the sort of thing that had him into his armour and on to the field of battle. He was a formidable foe. He heaped ridicule and scorn on the fat cats of the Canadian book world, and he was right often enough to maintain the affection and respect of most of the best of them. There is little

doubt that he often acted contrary to his own economic interest.

If his polemics produced crises with an air of artificiality about them, they increased his effectiveness in a way that gentle argument could not. His penchant for rushing to the podium or having a press conference to air his axes, and grind his axes, made Canadian institutions more sensitive to their obligation to acquire important material.

Amtmann did business under his own name, and then branched out into literary first editions, in partnership with Laurie Lerew, formerly an employee. He founded the first Canadian book auction firm. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1970, and received an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan in 1974.

He was of slight build, five feet six and one hundred and twenty-five pounds. He ate sparingly, drank a little wine, chain smoked, and drank endless cups of coffee. In his later years he suffered from heart trouble. In the autumn of 1978 he entered hospital for the last time. He died in his 72nd year, on January 9, 1979.

In the few pages of autobiographical notes he left, he asked with untypical wistfulness if he hadn't been too critical, too much of a gadfly. He must have written that on a bad day. The essential Amtmann could never accept a *status quo* or admit an error. After his death one admirer admitted to having had more battles with Bernard Amtmann than with the rest of the book world combined, and added that his respect and affection continued undiminished. The spark of his genius was as difficult to grasp as it was to define.

II

BERNARD AMTMANN was born in Vienna on July 11, 1907, the first of three children of Jacob Emil Amtmann and his wife, Amalia Wengraf. The following year a daughter, Johanna (usually known as Hansi), was born, and two years later a second son, Willy. The family was Jewish and well integrated into an Austrian society that had for generations welcomed the cultural gifts and business acumen of the Jews. They were of modest means, but learning, music, and the arts were important elements of their family life.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire which had been a force in Europe for generations was now in its last years. The First World War broke out and Jacob Amtmann served in the Austrian army. Defeat in 1918 brought the dismemberment of the Empire, the creation of new nation states, a much reduced Austria, and ensuing economic chaos. Austria became a republic. Vienna, one of the great cities of Europe, lost much of its economic and cultural supremacy as the Empire disintegrated. By 1919, conditions at home had become so bad that the children were sent to foster homes abroad to avoid starvation. They returned the following year as conditions improved.

At school the language of instruction was German, with French taught as a second language and English available if desired. Musical evenings were a regular event among the Amtmann family and friends. Their father was an avid reader, a regular patron of two of the local public libraries, bringing home books to encourage the children to read. The Amtmann children produced plays and concerts in the home. Typically, Bernard took charge. He wrote the material, allocated parts, and directed the production. Willy handled the music and Hansi was the cashier, and the invited friends and relatives were charged a small fee to cover the costs of production. Theirs was a particularly happy family, together after the trauma of war and want. Their religious life was relaxed. They observed the High Holidays but otherwise followed for the most part the typical lives of the lower middle class. Even as a youth, Bernard

tended to look at the world from a rationalist, secular view. At fourteen he left school and went to work, the normal course for a young man of his circumstances.

He worked first as a messenger and then became an apprentice in a bank. The work was boring, with little challenge at his level. He left and got a job with a printing company. He became engrossed in photography, photographic equipment, and printing machines. There was scope for a young, active mind in a period of innovation. His new job went well, and in 1934 he was able to establish his own business in photographic supplies. He opened an office with Hansi as his assistant. His home was his warehouse. It was a small beginning but it meant independence and the opportunity to be creative.

The university was beyond reach but there were evening courses available. Bernard was interested in philosophy and had the good fortune to study under Dr. Wilhelm Löwinger, an able professor with the ability to nourish hungry young minds. Löwinger responded kindly to the youthful enthusiast who tended to dominate the discussions in class, and the two would often argue and discuss well into the night. Under Löwinger's influence, Bernard's philosophical development led him to agnosticism. He looked at the world from a secular perspective, politically, his were the evolving views of the young social democrat. His emotions became as volatile as his ideas. He fell in love in the late 1930s and probably would have married but for the signs of approaching war.

Jacob Amtmann lost his job in the Great Depression, but Bernard's business prospered. The photographic field was in a period of transition, and he was fascinated by the new technologies and processes which appeared ready to revolutionize the world of photography.

Economic chaos weakened the liberal democracies and brought on the rise of totalitarianism. Germany, burdened by war debts, unemployment, and food shortages, fell prey to nationalism. Adolf Hitler led the National Socialist German Workers' Party to power, promising to regain for Germany her rightful place in the world, to reassert German pride, and to escape the punitive conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. Jews throughout Europe watched with apprehension as the Nazis

secured their rule at home, and moved without serious opposition to expand their borders in Europe. In Austria, a new constitution was adopted on May 1, 1934, which established a quasi-Christian fascist state. Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered by Nazi stormtroopers in Vienna on July 25, 1934.

Meanwhile, Bernard had become acquainted with a man working on an invention to revolutionize existing methods of copying and reproducing prints. They became partners as Bernard agreed to finance the research, and in due course he decided to go to London to attempt to sell the process after it had progressed to the appropriate point. Before he could go, conditions worsened in Austria as the local Nazi movement became increasingly powerful. Secret police prepared lists of communists and Jews. The German Army entered Austria on March 11, 1938. The following day Bernard and his partner left Vienna and made their way to France.

Once in France Bernard tried to go to London, but with the imminence of war England had closed its borders to many refugees in the interest of national security. He could not return to Vienna. An immigrant without papers in France in 1938 had little choice of jobs. He decided upon a course of action which would satisfy his sense of honour and give him security; he volunteered for the French army, was accepted and sent to a regiment at Auxerre in the north of France. This gave him a recognized status in France.

Hansi had been permitted to emigrate to Britain where she had obtained employment as a domestic servant. The senior Antmanns had returned home one evening to find the keyhole of their door filled with lead. They went into hiding for a few days until a train journey was arranged that took them to the French-German border. A car picked them up and took them to lodgings that Bernard had arranged for them in Paris.

Only Willy remained in Vienna and he was in danger. Hansi explained the problem to her English employer who provided the solution, by arranging a ship's passage for Willy with Shanghai as the alleged destination. The ruse worked and Willy was allowed to enter England just before war broke out between Germany and Britain. As an alien from a potentially enemy country there were difficulties. He volunteered for the British army and was accepted, but on the outbreak of war he was discharged and sent into internment in Canada as an enemy alien of military age. Willy studied draughtsmanship in the camp and was able to keep up his music, providing entertainment for the staff and his fellow internees. It was a relaxed confinement but still imprisonment in a strange country, far from family and friends.

Bernard corresponded regularly with Hansi until the end of the so-called phony war. He wrote in English to make himself more familiar with the language and Hansi had his letters corrected and sent them back. Life continued with Bernard in the army in the north and his parents in Paris until the war started in earnest in the spring of 1940. The German Blitzkrieg rolled over Holland and Belgium and into France. Bernard's regiment was overrun and its survivors swept south along with the masses of refugees fleeing the Germans. His parents left Paris and reached Nevers. France surrendered and the Germans occupied much of the country. Bernard and his parents went on to unoccupied France and settled quietly in Montauban. Bernard did various menial jobs and joined the Resistance, the French underground army.

He got a job as a waiter in a hotel frequented by German officers. With his knowledge of French and German and some English, he became an interpreter for the Germans, a position which informed him about German activities in the area. His underground unit was engaged in sabotage. Wiry and tough, inventive and determined, Bernard became a sergeant in the Resistance, with the cover name of Amouroux. There was always the danger of a slip, of knowing too much, of showing some emotion when the diners discussed a train derailment or a sabotaged factory.

His parents grew old and his father died. He was buried in Montauban. His mother lost interest in the world and was finally taken by Bernard to a convent, where she was cared for and hidden from the Germans.

In June, 1944, the Allies invaded Normandy. Bernard's group, along with the other Resistance units, joined the Free French forces as regulars. He fought in various actions as the Allies battled their way through France and into Germany. The

Germans surrendered in May, 1945, and Hansi was able to visit her family during the summer. They and their mother discussed the future and agreed they would not return to Vienna. They would make a fresh start in the New World. Hansi had been engaged to a young Austrian, prior to her going to England in 1938. His name was Bruno Lamberger, and he had gone to Rhodesia the same year that she went to England. After the war they married and moved to New York.

In Canada, Willy had been released from internment in October, 1942. His training as a draughtsman in the camp provided him with qualifications which enabled him to get a job with an architect. He had also given music lessons and later he was to return to music as a teacher with the Ottawa Board of Education, and, years later, to publish a history of music in Canada.* By 1947, Willy was established in Ottawa. Bernard and his mother were unable to go to New York because this could only be done under the quota system for Austrian immigrants. It would be easier to go to Ottawa, and in many ways Canada was more attractive. It, too, offered freedom, opportunity, and unlimited potential. In addition, there was a large French-speaking element, and in French Canada something of the atmosphere of the Old World. After the usual delays, Bernard and his mother arrived in Ottawa in October, 1947.

Bernard was now forty years of age. He arrived in Canada with two suitcases of books and a few dollars in Canadian currency. On his way he had stopped in London and met several leading antiquarian book dealers. His lifelong interest in books and writing found a new avenue for development. He came to Canada determined to enter the old book trade. It was a

good time to do so. The Canadian government had commissioned Vincent Massey to head a review of the arts, letters, and sciences, and to make recommendations as to how best they might be encouraged. Universities and public libraries were about to enter the golden age of their expansion, with large amounts of money becoming available to increase their library holdings, and there was soon to be founded the National Library of Canada.

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*The idea of writing the history occurred to Willy one day while browsing through old books on Bernard's shelves. Bernard encouraged and guided him, which led Willy first to his doctoral thesis and then on to the book. The English edition appeared in 1975 and the French edition the following year. In his preface, Willy paid his brother the following tribute: "Special gratitude is due my brother, Bernard, whose book collection of Canadiana sparked [my] curiosity and whose enthusiasm for historical research inspired the desire to trace the springs of musical art in Early Quebec." (See Appendix a.)

Bernard's most pressing need was to earn a living for himself and his mother. He made his first sale within days of arriving in Ottawa, and immersed himself in the study of Canadian history. He spent hours in the Public Archives and the Library of Parliament, studying and familiarizing himself with their resources.

In his first two years in Ottawa he produced and distributed four catalogues of old books. They included poetry, religion, and history, as well as Canadiana. He made a living from the start by hard work and careful management, and having that indispensable flair for recognizing rare and important material. In his first catalogue he listed William Parry's *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* …, London, 1842, at $12.00, and Samuel Hearne's *Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson Bay* …, London, 1795, at $125.00. He also stated he expected both to rise in value in the future. In 1979 the Parry was selling for $200.00 and in 1986 it sold for $650.00. The Hearne sold for $2,200.00 at auction in 1979.

Hansi and Bruno Lamberger moved to Montreal from New York in early October, 1950, and Bernard pondered the same move. Montreal was a better city for book dealers and there were more collectors. It was largely a French-speaking city, bigger than Ottawa and more cosmopolitan. His mother had been unable to visit Hansi in New York because of immigration restrictions. Bernard and his mother moved to Montreal in early November, 1950.

III

BERNARD AMTMANN opened a store on Greene Avenue in Westmount in May, 1951, first briefly at 1215 and then at 1247, exactly where the entrance to Westmount Square is today. He began to develop a walk-in trade, a regular retail business in addition to his catalogue business, and he became increasingly aware of the importance of printed ephemera.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines ephemera as 'insect[s] living only a day ... [a] short-lived thing.' Printed ephemera are anything printed to serve a specific purpose: a politician's poster or handbill in the days leading to an election, a notice announcing the arrival of the circus or an itinerant pedlar of patent medicines. They range in substance from the Proclamations of 1792, announcing the granting of land to Loyalists in the Eastern Townships and Upper Canada, to the invitation by a merchant in a small town to his end-of-season clearance sale. They often took the form of broadsides, a single sheet printed on one side, which sometimes appeared as advertisements in local newspapers as well.

A random selection might include a legal form from the 1810s with the blanks to be filled in; a warning to citizens to beware of rabid dogs in Quebec City in 1819, a licence to sell spirituous liquors from the 1830s, a notice advertising a reward for information leading to the arrest of an arsonist who set fire to a lumber mill in Hawkesbury, Ontario, in 1844, a sale of needlework in a church bazaar in Quebec City in 1855, the Annual Meeting of the Fruit Growers' Association of Upper Canada in St. Catharines, Ontario, in 1864, the Grand Entertainment of the Y.W.C.T.U. of Aylmer, Ontario, in January, 1888, Sir John A. Macdonald's bookplate, and a Boer War Christmas card sent home by a member of the Canadian contingent in South Africa.

The importance of printed ephemera has increased in recent years with the emphasis on social history: who knew that Quebec City had a problem with rabid dogs in 1819? Or that an arsonist set fire to a paper mill in Hawkesbury in 1844? Or that the reward notice was printed by Armour in Montreal? These and a near infinite number of other purposes and causes are recorded primarily, and sometimes only, in printed ephemera, nailed to trees and handed to passersby, destined to disappear in the wind and the rain.

There have been thousands of these items printed throughout the years, almost all thrown away or used to light fires. Occasionally someone kept some of them, perhaps a mother because a son was running for office, a benevolent society with a meticulous secretary keeping records, or a printer maintaining his files. Most decades had their distinctive styles of printing: the 1810s, the 1850s, and the 1890s differ substantially, and a collection of a dozen samples from each year would provide a succinct history of Canadian printing in the nineteenth century available in no other way, and one that would fit in a suitcase.

Ephemera were indispensable to the political process, recording spontaneous reactions to the issues of the day, dashed off rather than planned, polemical rather than scholarly. They refuted and rebutted, they heaped ridicule and scorn. They were often anonymous to avoid libel or physical assault. They were contemporary, contentious, and argumentative, valuable historical documents and primary sources. Crudely printed and cheaply produced, they became victims of time and wear, ignored as unscholarly and intemperate.

Nowadays, we are inundated with ephemera at every election. Parties and candidates publish a vast quantity of material and some libraries collect it as it appears. Probably less than five percent of those published in the nineteenth century are recorded, and as material on the Rebellion of 1837, the question of Confederation, the Riel Rebellions of 1870 and 1885, and the building of the CPR is found, it is sought after and commands a high price.

Amtmann was soon at home in the antiquarian book business in Montreal. He moved comfortably in both the French and English milieux and if his business developed more in the English milieu it was because of the greater size of the North American English-speaking market. He soon had a ready facility in English. Throughout his career he sought advice on how to express his thoughts, but his written and spoken English

soon surpassed that of the average anglophone citizen. His letters, briefs, and papers argued his case with competence, eloquence, and assurance. He was probably more relaxed, more naturally at home with the francophone writers and intellectuals, many of whom became friends or friendly acquaintances. His tastes in food and drink and his view of life in general were more French than English.

The Canadian Library Association held its annual meetings in different cities across the country. Amtmann sometimes attended, finding them excellent opportunities to meet the leading librarians, to make friends, to exchange views, and to find new customers. Many, from the time of their first meeting, looked to him as a source of information and important material, and his shop attracted customers from all over the country. Academics, students, collectors, publishers of small presses tended to gravitate to his shop and usually were shown new and exciting material to examine and consider. Amtmann had a flair for bringing along the small collector, for encouraging him and finding him fine items that weren't expensive, but at the same time, looking forward to the day when the novice would be in the market for rare material. Lord Beaverbrook, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Gregory Javitch were among the important collectors who frequented his shop, and no dealer played a more important role than he did in building the notable collections of Lawrence Lande.

His knowledge of Canadian material and the major holdings of it in Canada and the United States continued to grow as he studied the bibliographies. He learned the importance of agrarian radicals in Western Canada, the role both religious and secular of the church in French Canada, and the influence of the Loyalist tradition throughout English Eastern Canada, and he continued to find books, pamphlets, and ephemera that were not recorded.

His sister Hansi had originally worked as a seamstress in Montreal. As his business grew, both she and her husband worked in the bookshop. In 1956, she joined her brother full-time. She opened the store, looked after orders, served customers, and managed the accounts. Her manner and presence inspired confidence and gave an air of stability and order to the business Amtmann was an early riser and often worked long into the night He was frequently away from the office looking for material and he depended on his sister, in effect the office manager, to look after things in his absence

As the universities expanded there was increasing demand for books Developing Canadian studies required ever increasing library resources with special collections more and more prominent He added another assistant, Laurie Lerew, an Australian who had settled in Montreal In 1960, the American Library Association and the Canadian Library Association both held conventions in Montreal The presence of thousands of librarians offered a unique opportunity to booksellers, and Mrs Lerew quickly proved a useful addition to the Amtmann team In the fall of 1960, he set up Laurie Hill Ltd , a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bernard Amtmann Inc , to deal in non-Canadian material and modern first editions Laurie Lerew was in charge and the business did well from the start

The 1960s saw an unprecedenred growth in the number of new Canadian universities and graduate schools There was likewise a proliferation of community colleges All these institutions required vast quantities of books, and sales escalated dramatically, matched by the output of Amtmann catalogues In 1956 and 1957 twenty-four and twenty-three lists and catalogues were published, respectively The total from 1956 to 1960 was eighty-seven 1961 to 1966 saw one hundred and fifteen, with the extraordinary number of forty in 1962 alone

It was during this lavish period that universities, for instance York and Alberta, bought the entire contents of bookshops, and, in the case of the University of Alberta, acquired the proprietor as well, to be in charge of acquisitions Amtmann worked out an arrangement with some institutions to provide quantities of material at a unit price When Queen's decided to build a comprehensive collection of basic material relating to French Canada he shipped them everything he thought appropriate and the university returned those titles they already had It may sound peculiar at this distance and in a period of declining acquisitions, but it was practical in those days of vast budgets and small holdings Queen's acquired thousands of titles at unit price well below their current catalogue value He offered the same arrangement to other institutions, most of which declined, on the grounds that they, not the bookseller, should decide what was appropriate to their collections. Bernard, not very reasonably, resented their presumption.

With so much demand the prices of both new and old books rose dramatically. New books doubled in price in less than a decade. Early Champlain Society volumes quadrupled in price in fifteen years. The beautiful first volume of the Lande Bibliography appeared in 1965, perhaps the finest book ever produced in Canada. It was published in two limited editions, the fine at $350 and the trade at $135, although the term 'trade edition' sounds peculiar when used to describe so outstanding a production.

Amtmann was delightedly in the vanguard as prices soared, although he faced growing criticism from librarians. Collectors were generally pleased when they had higher valuations on their collections, but less so when they attempted to buy. The best titles always sold at any price, even after buyers' resistance finally brought a little order to the market. Amtmann began to enjoy entertaining as he achieved a measure of financial stability. He became a connoisseur of the better restaurants. He enjoyed the sauna baths at Le Cartier, dined and played bridge with friends, bought and sold, and talked history, literature, books and bibliography.

In his reflective moments, he dreamed about a large and important company involved in all aspects of the antiquarian book business. It would operate world wide and he would run it from Montreal. It would include rare books, literature, first editions, manuscripts, unrecorded pamphlets, and the finest maps. It would have an auction house and a publishing house. Lost material would reappear and it would be marketed with its significance revealed and its splendour properly described. How he would have delighted in that extraordinary letter of Sir John A. Macdonald that Craig Fraser offered for sale through Canada Book Auctions on December 3, 1979, in sale 122, as lot 146.

Macdonald had been in England for several months negotiating the final form of the British North America Act, which was to bring about Canadian Confederation. He wrote to Sir Henry James Sumner Maine in Calcutta, from London, April 9, 1867

It was a long letter, entirely in Sir John's hand, discussing the legal development of Lower Canada, and concluding with the following remarkable statement:

> I have been in England since November & at last succeeded. I sail in 4 days for Canada with the act uniting all British America in my pocket. A brilliant future would certainly await us were it not for these wretched Yankees, who hunger & thirst for Naboth's field [i.e. Canada] – War will come someday between England and the United States and India can do us Yeoman's service by sending an army of Sikhs – Ghoorkas, Belooches, etc, etc., across the Pacific to St. [sic] Francisco and holding that beautiful and immoral city with the surrounding California as security for Montreal and Canada.

Was Macdonald serious? He certainly wasn't drunk, his stereotype notwithstanding, for it comes at the end of a long discussion of complex legal questions cogently expressed. It is known that some members of Lincoln's cabinet had wanted to keep the Northern Army intact after the American Civil War to conquer Canada in the interest of American Manifest Destiny. There had been recent Fenian raids into Canada from American bases. The Biblical reference may seem obscure to some today, but what is clear is that the Prime Minister of Canada was apprehensive about a possible American invasion. By the time Amtmann had organized the publicity (and appeared on American television news!), the letter would have been known throughout the English-speaking world and beyond.

IV

THE IDEA OF AN AUCTION HOUSE had been in Bernard Amtmann's mind for years. The big auction houses of the United States, Britain, and France auctioned books, but they auctioned other things as well: paintings, silver, china, weapons, manuscripts, anything that appeared likely to create interest and revenue. Amtmann wanted an auction house dealing exclusively with books, manuscripts, pamphlets, maps, prints and the like, so that these might be recognized for their own importance, rather than as marginal activities of firms specializing in other things. He had in the past encouraged others to establish such a house, but without result. When a fine opportunity presented itself, Bernard leaped into the breach.

He had been asked by the president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec to appraise their library's holdings. The Society is the oldest of Canadian learned societies, its antecedents going back to a public library started by Governor Haldimand in 1780. Its interest in history, natural history, science, and literature started in the early nineteenth century, and its first publication appeared in 1829. Its library has continued to the present day, a small public library in Quebec City catering to the English-speaking and -reading public of the Old Capital. In 1966 it faced an acute shortage of operating funds. Some of its valuable holdings were more of American than of local interest, and even some of the local titles might be better held by larger libraries with modern means of conservation and security. Amtmann recommended that a number of the more valuable books be put up to public auction, and the less valuable books be disposed of through a dealer. The Society agreed and asked him to manage the sale.

With a large number of dramatic items available from so illustrious a source, and no book auction available in Montreal, he decided to fill the lack himself. He formed Montreal Book Auctions, Ltd., and arranged the first sale for the spring of 1967. It was held in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal, April 26, 1967; it was well organized and well promoted and aroused much public interest, it was a financial success, with sales of close to $150,000, or more than $200,000 in terms of the value of money in 1987. Two of the more dramatic items were a made-up atlas of contemporary maps of the American Revolutionary War, and a copy of the first book printed in Montreal, the rare first edition of the *Reglement de la Confrérie de l'adoration perpetuelle du Saint Sacrement et de la bonne mort* (Tremaine, *Canadian Imprints*, 230), printed by Fleury Mesplet in 1776. The buyers included prominent institutions in Quebec and Ontario, American universities, and British antiquarian book dealers, among them the firm of Charles W. Traylen of Guildford, England.

Amtmann was quick to learn that the success of an auction depended upon the arrangement of the lots offered, the presiding auctioneer, the promotion of the sale, and above all on the material put up for sale. Rare and important material carefully placed throughout the auction will bring good prices and enhance the value of the ordinary material that must provide the bread and butter. Exciting items arouse interest from around the world.

Montreal Book Auctions held six sales between April, 1967, and November, 1968, and shortly after the sixth it was announced that Christie, Manson & Woods of London had bought into Montreal Book Auctions in a joint venture, which saw the London firm with four members on the board of directors, along with Bernard Amtmann, Laurie Lerew, and Arthur Gill, a Montreal businessman and art collector. The new company held twenty sales from April, 1969, to September, 1970, eighteen in the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal, one in Ottawa and one in Calgary, in April and September, 1970, respectively. The joint venture was dissolved in some bitterness in October, 1970.

Amtmann had emphasized from the beginning that the purpose of the new company was not to create a Canadian arm of the London firm but rather to establish Montreal as an international centre for fine art, and to attract Canadian material back to Canada to be sold at auction. There was a clash of policies and personalities. With the dissolution of the joint venture, Bernard reactivated Montreal Book Auctions, and he held an auction at the Ritz in December, 1970. Christie's continued, briefly, to operate in Montreal with Laurie Lerew as their Montreal agent. Montreal Book Auctions continued until Bernard's death. It was subsequently sold to a group headed by Craig Fraser, the proprietor of Specialty Book Concern. The new owners moved the business to Toronto and changed the name to Canada Book Auctions. (For details of the history of the auction house, see Appendix c.)

By the time Amtmann returned to the auction business on his own, his reputation had led to an increasing demand for his services as an appraiser. Most of the valuations were done for private individuals or estates. Some were for government and academic institutions. They were a useful source of income and sometimes of material as well. His advice was often sought on the disposal of duplicates and collections, which provided him with a supply of books and manuscripts. He had hoped to interest friends among the librarians and archivists across the country to from a corps of appraisers to advise on the disposal of duplicates and thus encourage material back into the market. The scheme never materialized because his friends wished to avoid the possibility of apparent conflict of interest, so most of them rejected the idea out of hand. Later, the Canadian Government, through its Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board, popularly known as the Cultural Property Board, provided something of the kind, by offering tax concessions to those who turn national treasures over to recognized repositories. The Board has worked well thus far, and for the most part has managed to avoid certain sleazy practices which have plagued such 'donations' in the United States.

Amtmann's interests led him to join many associations and societies, in particular those related to bibliography, book collecting, and publishing. He saw the need for a society of dealers in this country and was instrumental in forming the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada. Early in 1963 he began to discuss the formation of such a society with his colleagues. He stressed the advantages of a forum for an exchange of views. There was an increasing interest shown by the trade over the years and in due course the association was formed. The first annual meeting was held in Ottawa in 1967, and the association

has grown in importance through the years.

He was also active in the many attempts to form associations of bibliophiles, some of which held regular meetings. Most of them had a following for a while and then disappeared. When good intentions failed to sustain a number of such organizations, he began one of his own. He founded the Erasmus Circle in 1968. It was, he said, an informal organization of bookmen and bibliophiles, who met from time to time to discuss matters relevant to the world of books. The Erasmus Circle had no conventional membership. Anyone who turned up to a meeting was considered a member. Bernard got the idea (as well as the name) from a sentence in a letter from King Francis I of France to the Dutch philosopher: 'I want you to know that if you are willing to come you will be most welcome.'[*]

Under his hand the Circle published several issues of a bulletin, and organized a symposium held in conjunction with the Antiquarian Book Fair in Montreal in July, 1971. The subject for discussion was a recurring theme, and one of increasing sensitivity at the time: the relationship between antiquarian booksellers, collectors, academics, librarians, and archivists. In his remarks opening the symposium, Amtmann said that, as founder, he felt it inappropriate to take a leading part, but that such a society might encourage Canadians to broaden their outlooks. The idea for the Circle had come to him while visiting the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia. 'I was fascinated to be in a place where the spirit of the greatest American bookseller, one of the greatest of bibliophiles, has been kept alive.' He thought in the future the Circle might provide pleasure in the form of a fine dinner in addition to providing food for the mind. Canada lacked such a society, and the Erasmus Circle, centered in Montreal, should be a symbol of the two cultures. 'Le Cercle Erasme could become a symbol for what Montreal with its dual culture could be now and for the future.' Bernard did what he could to infuse his own enthusiasm and drive into the society. He obtained from Clive Driver, Director of the Rosenbach

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[*] The postscript to a letter written from Saint-Germain-en-Laye, on 7 July [1523]. We owe this reference to Dr. Ron Schoeffel of the University of Toronto Press.

Foundation, the famous Erasmus Bible one of three copies printed on vellum, to be exhibited at the Montreal meeting. The event created interest and publicity, but the Erasmus Circle itself faded into oblivion in the ensuing months.

In conjunction with his role in the formation of the ABAC, Bernard's office published *Abacus* and the first ten numbers of *Canadian Notes and Queries*, with news, views, information, and questions relating to Canadiana studies. The latter was carried on by William Morley after Bernard's death, with Michel Theriault and others later, as associate editor.

With the revival of his own auction business, Amtmann looked for continuing support from collectors, public libraries, the universities, and above all from the National Library and the Public Archives in Ottawa. The excitement of the auction had captivated him, and the participation of the major libraries and archives publicized their commitment in a way that receiving and ordering from a catalogue could not. This, however, led to an odd situation, and one which showed him at other than his best. He had been criticized for the prices of some of his rare material, and he thought the auction offered the means of answering that criticism. If there was open competition for a fine piece of rare Canadiana, if a free market prevailed, then the marketplace would decide the right price. He was annoyed when the institutions agreed among themselves not to compete in certain areas and for some of the rarest material. The same people who criticized his prices would agree among themselves not to let the free market determine what the price should be. Collusion (he thundered, to anyone who happened to be around), producing a combination in restraint of trade.

In fact, such arrangements, illegal or otherwise, could only eliminate a few potential competitors: the nation's libraries often disagreed among themselves, and the abler collection builders only let the books they really wanted go elsewhere with the greatest reluctance. He was especially critical of archivists. He came to view archivists as the bane of antiquarian booksellers because they tended to believe that unique items of historical importance belonged to them by right. They were not used to paying for manuscripts and they wanted no competition from antiquarian booksellers who had to be businessmen as well as scholars He rejected the lofty ideals which flowed as patriotic claptrap from behind the archivists' walls as they basked somnolent in their tenure Bookdealers were as patriotic as archivists, and examples were legion of important material being offered free to archivists who returned it as unworthy and then bought it when it was offered for sale by a dealer who had recognized its importance Canadian material was being bought by foreign collectors and institutions As things were, he maintained, significant pieces of the Canadian heritage were being bought by Americans for American institutions If the custodians of the artifacts of our heritage were really concerned over the loss of national treasures, they could save them by outbidding the foreign competition at auction

His views found ready access to the newspapers Dr Wilfrid Smith, the Dominion Archivist, replied, scoffing at the suggestion that much Canadian material of historical importance was finding its way to the United States He suggested that the publicity given in the press helped the cause of opportunistic sellers and urged Canadian archival repositories to resist being held to ransom by the bogey of American buyers ready to pay exorbitant prices for manuscripts Canada was already carrying on a steady and vigorous repatriation of historical manuscripts and records from France, Great Britain, and the United States Instead of spending large sums of money on single documents such as the incomplete McLeod Diary it was 'better to use our limited resources on acquisition and preservation of important collections of lasting research value, which will truly represent the heritage of Canada' (Letter to the *Montreal Star*, November 30, 1971.) Amtmann refrained from further comment at the time, but noted that it was no thanks to the Public Archives that the Riel Diary remained in Canada since they had dropped out of the bidding early, and it had been left to a private Canadian citizen, a Metis and former Member of Parliament, Gene Rheaume, to ensure that it remained here.

Over the years, Amtmann considered various ways of setting up a corporation or a group of individuals for the purpose of buying items which might otherwise be lost to Canada There was some support in both Eastern and Western Canada, but not enough to organize it in a formal way One version was to function as The Hundred Associates, a good historical name, which would operate in the manner that Arthur Doughty's Hundred Associates had for the Public Archives in the 1920s. A few items were actually bought in this way with the auction house acting as agents, and were subsequently resold to Canadian repositories.

Amtmann's view of Canadian heritage and the whole question of nationalism went beyond the traditional platitudes. He had seen enough of the raw nationalist spirit to turn him against such an emotion forever. He was proud to be a Canadian, a choice he had freely made, he felt it a privilege to be a citizen of a country with traditions of freedom and justice, he was annoyed by the divisions within the country and had little sympathy with extreme views of any stripe, and he was upset by what seemed to him to be indifference to a splendid heritage. Canadians were aimless as a people and not making the most of their vast potential. In his considered opinion archivists, librarians, and the appropriate departments of government should be providing leadership in cultural matters, but this leadership was lacking.

Amtmann had arrived in this country with little money and few prospects. By hard work and application, he had fashioned a niche for himself in a new society. He had become recognized as a specialist in Canadian historical material and a leader in the antiquarian book world. Obviously, it was to his material advantage that there be an increasing interest in books, manuscripts, and such, but those who knew him best were convinced that his devotion to the preservation of our heritage took precedence over pecuniary gain. He gave unstintingly of his time and money to promote the interests of the book trade, and as the trade gained respect, a good deal of its progress was owing to him.

One serious shortcoming was his lack of understanding of the problems of library administration. He never recognized the number of demands on library budgets, even in their palmiest days. Plan as a librarian might to add to the Rare Book Room and the Canadiana Collection, the pressure of numbers required that an increasing portion of the library budget be used for the books needed by undergraduates. Likewise, the number

and the cost of periodicals soared almost beyond belief.

Amtmann never fully appreciated the Canadian tradition of support for the Public Archives, support which engendered budgetary allocations for the acquisition of material. When an important item became available at high cost, he assumed that the money could and should be found, as indeed it often was. He could not accept that an important piece was not bought by the Public Archives for reasons other than ignorance or indifference.

What he saw was the institutions spending tens of thousands of dollars to purchase collections and papers of Canadian authors, spending hundreds of thousands to purchase the papers of an eminent British philosopher, and the National Gallery spending a million for the acquisition of a single painting. He favoured these expenditures, but asked, if these were worth the price, why were the letters of a Laurier or a Molson not also worthy of purchase? Politicians could find the money for glamorous expenditures but not for priceless, unique historical papers and artifacts.

When interest in the Riel Diary was slow to materialize, he saw Canadians as immature and puritanical, not yet aware that exceptional pieces required substantial outlay. The press often seemed to share his preference for the colourful and dramatic, rather than the factual and accurate. When the McLeod Diary was sold to the agent for an American institution, he was reported to have said: 'We lost our land [the Old Northwest stretching as far as the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers] to the States and now we have lost the manuscript that is the proof of that loss.'

His description of the Molson letters which were offered for sale in 1973 as having 'all the fascination of a Canadian Forsyte Saga' was colourful but the analogy false. The correspondence was between a husband and wife over fourteen years, the Forsyte Saga dealt with the complex family relationships over three generations. When neither the Molson Papers nor the Laurier love letters received adequate bids, he felt injured, insulted, and frustrated, and with good reason. A decade later they would have sold for two or three times the price.

Bernard put his thoughts in an open letter to Canadian

archivists, which appeared in *The Canadian Archivist* of May, 1974. It is a brilliant polemic and should be read in its entirety. Here we attempt a summary. Starting with 'some of my best friends are archivists and librarians', he went on to say that he found himself diametrically opposed to them on matters of principle and philosophy. He conceded that the difficulty probably arose from the fact that the prices he considered fair they considered exorbitant, and went right to the heart of the matter.

> The Canadian Establishment does not care for 'vieux papiers souvent scandaleux', and displays a lack of knowledgeable cultural sensibilities. (When I sold the Jacobs papers, the Jewish community of Montreal was almost up in arms over the fact that private papers were offered on an auction block; when I sold the Riel diary I was threatened with injunctions and received menacing phone calls; the same when I offered the Laurier love letters.) I do not blame the federal or provincial governments for their seeming cultural indifference. Politicians are responsible to their electors and they might have difficulties in explaining to them that they paid money for old papers.

Amtmann then referred to the Laurier love affair with Madame Lovergne as dealt with by the historian Joseph Schull, and quoted from the editorial in the *Montreal Star* which echoed his views. He described the historian's function as establishing the facts and his as dealer to find a buyer. That no Canadian collector or institution would pay the necessary money reflected on all Canadians.

He expressed delight that McMaster University would spend a reported $520,000 for Bertrand Russell's papers and that the Canadian Government could find a million dollars for a European painting,

> But how irreverent of me to mention in the same breath a Riel diary which the government did not think worth more than $12,000, allowing it to fall to private interests, how absurd of me to mention 344 pages of intimate love

> letters of a French Canadian from Arthabaska for which the Government of Canada could not find even the slightest interest.

He made his point dramatically but unfairly. To say that the papers of a French Canadian from Arthabaska were not worth buying is, in today's fashionable phrase, a racist remark. Did he mean that the government would have thought the papers worth more had they been those of an English Canadian from Toronto? Or perhaps that those of an important European would have produced a different reaction? Nonetheless, Riel's diary should have been worth more than $12,000 to the nation and the Laurier letters more than $5,000.

He was on less sound ground with his contention that the normal manoeuvres of potential buyers to eliminate competitors create 'monopolistic situations … [and] becomes collusion and is subject to legal investigation and pursuit.' As is evident from Dr. Smith's inability to buy the diary at the price he thought right, there were at least two bidders prepared to pay double the price acceptable to the Public Archives.

The essence of Amtmann's case was that archivists and librarians are custodians of the material, historians decide its merits and historical importance, but the determination 'of financial values ought to rest with the experts, specialist antiquarian dealers in books and manuscripts.' To a point, perhaps, but that does not account for the fact that some librarians and archivists also know prices. The idea that institutional buyers have to produce whatever price the dealer thinks appropriate for a given piece sounds fine from the dealers' point of view, but the world doesn't work that way. The one effective control that buyers have in a rising market is the refusal to buy, though they sometimes regret it later, for they know that they should have bought when they didn't or couldn't.

Amtmann finished with a rhapsodic flourish, and eloquent tribute to us splendid fellows the dealers. 'We are not custodians, nor are we keepers … we sold our goods to princes and kings, to Bodleys and Pepys … In our hand the material is alive. It becomes a treasured reality, not simply another number on an all but inaccessible shelf. And we sell it, imparting in some measure the fascination of our discovery and the beauty of our adventure. It is not yet dead, but it loses its life in the institutional embrace. But we remember the fragrance of what we have traded away.'

A magnificent flight of fancy! Bernard Amtmann, in the spirit of Errol Flynn, as Robin Hood versus the Sheriff of Nottingham, the progressive outlaw versus the reactionary establishment figure. He is arguing that the librarian or archivist should buy whatever the bookseller thinks he should buy and pay whatever the bookseller thinks the price should be, and that The Nation should find the money to pay for it. There are flaws in his argument, but he states it well:

> In my view librarians and archivists are by definition custodians of the material in their possession ... The determining of financial values ought to rest with the experts, specialist antiquarian dealers in books and manuscripts, and with auctioneers. The historical appraisal of material must surely be the responsibility of historians. And the ultimate decision to purchase or not to purchase ... should be left with the executive branch of the department involved. Purchases of special material should not be made dependent on available funds; special funds should be made available for special purchases ...

Thus the dealer finds the rare item, the historian judges its historical importance, the dealer prices it, and the archivist or librarian buys it and looks after it. He also puts a number on it, and places it on an all-but-inaccessible shelf. If it is an item that commands an exceptional price, special funds must be found for it at the discretion of the appropriate department head or, in special cases, the Treasury Board. It has worked something like that for years. This should be qualified by adding that some archivists or librarians are history specialists themselves, and not everything to which a dealer assigns a high price will be thought worth it by those with the responsibility to buy.

The final decision whether or not to buy must rest with the institution. This has meant that ignorance, indifference, and inertia can and have been responsible for wrong decisions camouflaged by a wall of institutional platitudes If Amtmann argued wrongly that the custodians should always agree with the dealer, his criticisms were incisive and often valid If some of his shafts went off into the clouds, some went to the bull's-eye, and occasionally one went into an overstuffed derriere. He woke up a lot of people along the way

V

BERNARD AMTMANN enjoyed the theatrical aspects of bookselling, a field that lends itself naturally to the pyrotechnical. He understood instinctively the marketing principle that it is not the steak that sells, it's the sizzle; to the extent that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, an exceptional piece prosaically described becomes as ordinary as its description.

On the other hand, an exceptional piece described in its literary and historical perspective, becomes recognizable for what it is, exceptional, perhaps unique. With a sound, dramatic description, the collector treasures it the more, and will often include the dealer's description in the book when it resides on his shelf. The institutional buyer may not, of course, but then he also stamps books, pastes things in them, throws away dust jackets, and otherwise vandalizes them, much as Vandal is defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as 'a race that ravaged Gaul, Spain, N. Africa & Rome, destroying many books & works of art &c.'

* * *

He had few friends and a limited social life. He liked to entertain and took his guests to the best restaurants. He disdained gossip and had little small talk. His political perspective was that of the social democrat. He discussed international affairs and domestic politics, and he enjoyed sports on television. An occasional quiet dinner and a game of bridge was about the extent of his social life. For all his militant views on matters of public controversy, and his own contributions towards it, he dealt with people in general with an Old-World charm and courtesy.

His work was both occupation and vocation. His weekends would include long talks with friendly collectors, out-of-town bookdealers, and visiting librarians. He was always discussing books, asking questions and checking material. Visitors who liked football as well as books could see both with Amtmann on an autumn afternoon. Coffee was always available, and sometimes a little Highland dew or a glass of sherry, for those so inclined, in the late afternoon.

After his mother's death in 1954, Bernard moved to a small flat on Crescent Street. He lived next in the Canthe Apartments, on Sherbrooke Street, just west of Peel, about the time a Quebec intellectual named Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was becoming well known across Canada, also had an apartment there. He subsequently moved across the street to the more fashionable Le Cartier, then to an apartment on McGregor Street, and later to the opulent Port Royal. After his marriage, the family moved to a handsome house at 39 Thornhill Avenue, Westmount, where they lived for a few years before moving to an apartment in Westmount Square, his last residence.

He kept many of his reference books and much of his best stock at home. As he bought material the choice items were taken home to be worked on at his leisure. He slept less than most people and when he had recent acquisitions or new ideas to expand, he might be found working at home or office at any hour of the night. He was a workaholic, one of that species who find their work so interesting that they are not happy away from it.

When he bought a library there would always be a handful of titles that he had not seen before, that might or might not be in the Union Catalogue. The process would begin: TPL, Gagnon, Casey, Tremaine, Dionne, Sabin, Morgan, Peel, Watters, Wing, or whatever seemed appropriate. He would dive into the histories and the reference books, completely absorbed, talking to himself, drinking coffee, lighting cigarettes, mumbling pensively: the scientist fascinated by the bug.

Amtmann had an instinct for the rare and important. Everything is rare, he said one day, and from his perspective everything was important to the total picture. Pamphlets once common filled dealers' shelves and catalogues for years and then disappeared. A printed item abounds, becomes scarce, and then is never seen. His job was to recognize them and get them into the appropriate collections, to sell them to collectors and institutions. Those who would not act on his recommendations were failing in their responsibilities.

One of his delights was establishing historical significance, relating old material to the issues of the day and finding why it was important. Which libraries had it? Which did not? How many copies were there in the country? How many copies were there anywhere? Finding why an item was important was as much part of the chase as finding it in the first place.

Several of his employees became important dealers in their own right after working for him, among them Warren Baker, Alfred Van Peteghem, and David Ewens. They learned by osmosis, by being there, seeing him in action and listening to him, not by any conscious master-apprentice relationship. He was a kind and generous employer although he could be scathing in his criticism. His staff's main complaint was that he would not let them work on the better material. This, not surprisingly, he kept for himself, and left his staff to the basic business housekeeping: typing the invoices, wrapping and mailing the books, sweeping the floor, making the interminable pots of coffee, and going out for his newspaper and his ever-present cigarettes.

Amtmann delighted in playing little jokes, in testing the gullibility of people. His friends sometimes wondered how many of his quixotic jousts were motivated by principle and how many by a delight in the absurd. His Spartan intellect was tempered by humour, by a sense of mischief. If his customers rejected a book at $500 in his catalogue as too expensive, he would rewrite the description and offer it again at a higher price, and often not only sell it but get a second order, both from buyers who had originally rejected it on grounds of price. In the same vein he agreed to the following prank at one of the auctions.

Mr. A, a regular, had the disconcerting habit of coming in with a bid below the opening bid, if that bid drew no response. The house was not against this in all cases, sometimes when an opening price drew no response, Nicholas Fick, the auctioneer, would lower it himself and start again, and the price would take off as the bidding progressed. On the other hand, if Mr. A's low bidding was permitted on a regular basis, no opening bid would be taken seriously.

So one day Mr. B, another regular, and Fick arranged to have a little fun. When there was no response to an opening bid and a lower bid was called out by A, a still lower bid was shouted by B. 'Sold', announced Fick, bringing down the hammer and indicating B, to the consternation of A and the confusion of the audience. The bidding proceeded to the next number while B offered to make a deal with A on the item in question. Amtmann watched the drama unfold with his eyes twinkling.

A more important incident illustrates the nature of the man and the peculiarity of the trade. A religious institution in Montreal decided to dispense with its library. They threw out half their books and the following year were about to throw out the rest when the bishop decided to call Amtmann. 'I'll give you a thousand dollars for the books sight unseen,' said Bernard. More than two hundred cartons were delivered to his office rather than the city dump, and the cheque changed hands. Putting to one side anything that seemed remotely of interest, Bernard filled six cartons out of the more than two hundred.

Of the half dozen exceptional volumes one little book turned out to be the first edition of the first book printed in Montreal, the *Règlement de la Confrérie*, referred to earlier. Only three other copies of this book were known. It sold at the first sale of Montreal Book Auctions, Ltd., for $2,500.

A couple of weeks after the cartons were delivered (and a year before the auction sale), another cleric called. Apparently unaware that as many books had been thrown out the previous year, he was outspoken in his condemnation of Amtmann for the low price he had paid. Bernard offered to return almost all the books and they could keep the cheque. The offer was accepted, the second cleric felt he had scored a victory, and the question for Amtmann of what to do with the remaining books was neatly disposed of. Honour was saved all around and everybody was satisfied. Most important, one of the most significant of Canadian books was recognized for what it was, and took its place of honour in the Rare Book Room of McGill University.

Amtmann had a flare for public relations, with individuals as well as with the media, and he was always available to the press. He was an elegant figure with a colourful history, had distinguished white hair, and, on appropriate occasion, wore a pinstripe suit. He always had a quotable remark or analogy, even if clearly rhetorical 'A bookseller of my type is like a fine vintage he improves with age '

* * *

In the autumn of 1972, at age sixty-five Bernard Amtmann surprised his family and friends with the announcement that he intended to marry His fiancée was Airdrie Wilson, a Montrealer who had married young and moved to Toronto In 1970, she had divorced, and returned to Montreal with her son Beckett Airdrie was a talented illustrator whose work was subsequently published, but after her return to Montreal she joined Montreal Book Auctions

Amtmann had wanted John Archer as best man, but with typical impetuosity set the wedding date without speaking to Archer, only to learn afterward that he would be unable to attend because of a previous, unavoidable commitment Bernard then arranged that his brother Willy stand with him Early on the day of the wedding, Bernard had tried to reach Willy in Ottawa, but got no answer He was sure Willy was on his way to Montreal but just in case he asked John Mappin to stand by in case of emergency

The couple were married at the Presbyterian Church of St Andrew and St Paul Bernard followed the proceedings with the greatest of interest, happily accepting the name MacAmtmann for the occasion, as suggested by a friend of Scottish descent

He readily adapted to the major changes in his life required by marriage and step-fatherhood at sixty-five He continued to be at work before most people were out of bed and he spent evenings at home with his family He took the first winter holidays of his life, enjoying the warmth and sunshine of the West Indies, thereby softening the impact of the Montreal winters He was proud of Airdrie's artistic talent and gave her every encouragement She was working on an illustrated children's book which was subsequently published in New York.* But it

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***The Stars in the Sky A Scottish Tale Retold* by Joseph Jacobs Pictures by Airdrie Amtmann (New York Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1979) was his relationship with Beckett that attracted the notice of visitors to the Amtmann home.

Beckett was six years old when his mother remarried. He was a bright, sensitive child, but he had lacked the guidance of a father's affection and authority. There was every opportunity for a clash of wills and a strained relationship. This did not develop, due in the main to Bernard's tact and strength. He enjoyed Beckett's youthful enthusiasms and he led his talents along constructive lines. Shortly after the marriage Beckett assumed his name, and Bernard gave him a desk at his office, with the nameplate "Beckett Amtmann, Vice-President." Bernard's private life in the early years after his marriage was warm and happy, for he felt he was needed and cherished. His affection for Beckett was deep and lasting and he could dream of developing a young mind to accomplish goals that had eluded him. This private world was a haven offering some refuge from his very real troubles in the business world.

* * *

When Bernard broke with Christie's after the auction of September, 1970, it was financially the most critical period of his career. He had arrived in Canada in 1947 at forty years of age, in the prime of his life, and buoyed with the prospects of a new career in a new land. When he split with Christie's he was in his sixties, with heavy responsibilities and burdened with debt. In addition to two active businesses he had family responsibilities. The years were passing and his dreams of a multifaceted success had been shattered.

The book auction business seemed to offer the fastest way back to financial stability and Montreal Book Auctions resumed its sales in December, 1970. His staff was competent and experienced, and Nicholas Fick an able auctioneer. But the auction business to be profitable must have substantial working capital and offer rare and unusual items. Nothing discourages owners from putting up rare material so much as a reputation for delays in payment. It was important to be able to buy fine material from the trade as well as to pay promptly for those sold from consignment. Owners of material sold expected payment

within thirty days of the sale but buyers commonly took sixty and more days to pay, the catalogue's stated conditions of immediate payment notwithstanding.

After each auction there was an anxious period of trying to balance payables and receivables, of getting prompt payment from buyers to satisfy the most persistent of his creditors, as well as to pay salaries, the rent, and the other operating expenses. There was little time and less money to be spent on Bernard Amtmann Inc., the original book business. Its sales declined steadily. Laurie Hill Books had ceased operation.

Bernard Amtmann Inc. no longer attracted an appreciable walk-in trade, as the stock was depleted and not refreshed by new purchases. New material now went to the auction house. Hansi kept the business going, filled mail orders, and worked on other projects as they arose. As the stock deteriorated, there were fewer catalogues and those few were less interesting. Amtmann's old customers regretted the passing of the retail business but he could do nothing about it. He had neither the time nor the energy to revitalize his retail business until he had paid off his debts.

With remarkable tenacity he kept the auction business going while he held off creditors, paying the most persistent and promising eventual payment to the others. He sold his business archives to the University of Montreal in 1972-73 and his bibliographical records to the National Library in 1976. A further influx of cash came when he sold his house on Thornhill Avenue for almost twice what he paid for it a few years earlier. Appraisals continued to be a substantial source of income. He offered shares in the company to a friend who had made him a loan, and in 1974 managed to pay off his major debts.

In early 1974 there came a request from the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan that he accept an honorary Doctorate of Laws. His feigned indifference could not mask the delight with which he accepted the honour. Bernard and Airdrie went to Regina for the convocation on May 24, 1974. He was presented by his old friend Dr. John H. Archer, Principal of the Regina Campus. The degree was conferred by the Prime Minister of Canada and Chancellor of the University, the Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker.

To be accepted by the academic community in this manner was a splendid experience for one who had been unable to attend high school. There was a wine-and-cheese reception in his honour at the Principal's residence, where he was greeted by the Premier of Saskatchewan and other luminaries of the university and the province. He was an honoured guest at the Alumni Ball that evening.

The University of Saskatchewan, in conferring this honour, recognized Amtmann's devotion to his adopted country. It acknowledged his indomitable will to find and record the printed and written sources of our national literature. Amtmann appreciated the honour conferred on him and he accepted it with grace and humility.

VI

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1974, the Canadian government announced its intention to enact legislation to prevent the export of books, manuscripts, and works of art of major cultural importance. By the terms of the proposed act, any such item sold in Canada for more than a specified price, originally $1,000, would have to be cleared by a board of experts before an export licence would be issued.

The principle was sound, and the resulting Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board provided the means to achieve the intended purpose. The details evolved from the first proposals and are complex and an explanation will not be attempted here, but Amtmann opposed the idea from the start, although it presented him with a dilemma. On one hand, the government should protect and encourage the development of Canadian culture; on the other hand, too much government involvement might cross the line between a respectable preservation of national traditions and a chauvinist devotion to indigenous works.

Amtmann was concerned that the resulting government involvement in the sale of books and manuscripts would hamper the flow of material into Canada and discourage purchases by Canadians abroad. The results have shown his fears to be unfounded. The board has functioned well, either helping to find appropriate repositories in Canada for both Canadian and non-Canadian works, or recommending the issuance of an export licence. In those cases where a buyer willing and able to pay a reasonable price could not be found for an important item, the government made available the funds so that the item would remain in Canada.

Amtmann's views were expressed in an article in the July 22, 1975, issue of the *Antiquarian Bookman*, and provoked an enthusiastic letter of support from Mary Benjamin, a leading American autograph dealer. In particular, Miss Benjamin upheld his view that historians, librarians, and archivists were the appropriate authorities to decide on the historical signi-

ficance of material and how it might best be conserved, but that the determination of financial values should rest with the specialist antiquarian dealers in the various fields.

Members of the Cultural Review Board were appointed by the Secretary of State, and Ian Clark of that department held lengthy consultations with experts in the areas affected. The administration of the law was modified by recommendations of the professionals, and the Antiquarian Bookdealers' Association of Canada was given representation on the Board. The Act has worked well. Fewer national treasures are destroyed as houses are cleaned out. The Act has increased interest and encouraged donations. More old diaries and old books than ever are being brought to dealers for evaluation.

In one sense, from the dealers' perspective, it has worked too well. The trade would like to buy much that is donated, but the rich have found that they can often make more money by giving than by selling: that is, the receipt they get for a cultural property saves them more in income tax than the cash they would have received in a sale to the trade. In addition, prestige will often result from an important gift, and many a beaming so-called donor basks in the publicity accompanying his so-called gift, while saving tens of thousands of tax dollars by virtue of his so-called charitable donation.

* * *

In his last decade, Amtmann's interest in bibliography resulted in the bulk of his publications. His major work was published in 1971-73, a four-volume *Contributions to a Short-Title Catalogue of Canadiana*. It listed the titles he had catalogued over a quarter of a century, and contained some 30,000 entries. It was modelled on the British *Short-Title Catalogue*, with the addition of prices, to indicate the direction of the market through the years. It was a major contribution, with more than 10,000 titles not recorded elsewhere.

His other work in the field included his *Contributions to a Dictionary of Canadian Pseudonyms and Anonymous Works Relating to Canada, Early Canadian Children's Books, 1763-1840, Canadian Children's Books, 1841-1867, Montreal Book*

Auction Records for the years 1967-1978, subsequently continued by Craig Fraser for the years of Canada Book Auctions, 1979-1982, but omitting the last sale of March, 1983. He had started others before he became ill in 1978. (See Appendix II for a list of his publications.)

Amtmann had no formal training or experience in bibliography. What he did have, and it served him well, was his boundless energy and enthusiasm. He broke new ground in several directions, but his efforts were amateurish. His *Short-Title Catalogue* was important. His works on pseudonyms and children's books were useful contributions but no more. Michel Theriault reviewed the two children's books for *Phaedrus*, vol. 7, no. 2/3, Winter, 1980, p. 33. He made the best of it, as he did not want to appear critical of a deceased friend, but he pointed out several shortcomings, and asked a question which he then answered:

> How many specialists in children's literature did Bernard consult? I know from having discussed it with him that he avoided most of them and argued with the others. Bernard was a maverick and somewhat of an 'agent provocateur', most people were afraid of him, a few of us loved him for it. But he was not always right — In the case of these bibliographies he made a mistake.

Theriault pointed out that he confused books for children with books for young people, and that he did not adequately define his objective. He regretted that Amtmann did not concentrate on the fields he knew best, but added that there were titles included which were not found elsewhere and that his work would be helpful in the preparation of a better bibliography in the future.

One of Amtmann's ambitions was to participate in a national bibliography of Canadiana, even to be in charge of it. In the mid-1970s, the national bibliography was constantly on his mind. He considered it the obvious monument for the centennial of Confederation. He was aware that the National Library was planning retrospective bibliographies going back to 1534, the year the Cartier's voyage up the St. Lawrence.

He knew that one major problem would be the bibliographers' obsession with perfection which led many of them to believe that if a bibliography was not complete it was worthless, and his hope was to compensate for this worthy if impossible ideal with a plan which was simplicity itself. He would start with a listing of 100,000 titles, to be published in six volumes, folio. The basic six-volume set would be supplemented by additional annual publications. The point of departure would be what was now available for listing. Gaps would be filled as additional information became available. In a couple of decades we would have a comprehensive inventory of our books, pamphlets, and printed ephemeras.

Amtmann was aware that it would be difficult for the National Library to accept his ideas, indeed to have him involved with the project in any capacity. Such an undertaking fell within the responsibility of the National Library as set out by statute. Dr. Guy Sylvestre, the National Librarian, tactfully did not dismiss his idea out of hand. There was a sympathetic exchange of views, but the National Library had its mandate and was carrying it out as thoroughly and forthrightly as time and funds permitted.

If Amtmann's project was to go forward it must do so outside the National Library and on its own resources. He approached several foundations and received many expressions of support but not the financial backing he required. He was disappointed but not discouraged; he felt he had made a sound proposal and had been taken seriously. The opportunity would arise again.

Amtmann enjoyed much of the process of revitalization going on in Quebec. He supported the liberation of the spirit that fired the Quiet Revolution. He sympathized with and encouraged the young artists and writers who poured out their hearts and souls in expressions of life and energy. He could not condone the excesses that all rapid changes engender, but the youthful enthusiasm of the times found a match in his own.

He did not approve of the removal of literary manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale to the Archives nationales, as was done by the Quebec Government, thus precipitating the resignation of the head of the Library. Amtmann wrote a letter in his support and critical of the government which appeared in the *Montreal Star*, February 3, 1973.

His last public brawl occurred in 1977, and included many of the recurring themes that had enlivened his years in the auction business. He was offered the letters and personal papers of Sir James Robert Gowan, an Irishman who had come to Canada in 1832, and he settled in Upper Canada on land which was to become Peel County. Gowan was a prominent Orangeman, sat for forty years on the Bench of Ontario, and was one of the commissioners appointed in 1873 to investigate the Pacific Scandal. In the later years of a long career he was a member of the Canadian Senate.

His papers included some 2,500 letters, many from prominent people including eighty-one by Sir John A. Macdonald. These provoked considerable publicity and were featured in three auction catalogues in the first half of 1977, inviting bids and expressions of interest from institutions and private collectors. The one firm offer came from the Ontario Archives for $25,000, one tenth of Amtmann's appraisal, and was rejected with the disdain he thought it merited.

It also inspired Amtmann's quintessential polemic, which he had printed in a small edition of about 200 copies, without a limitation statement, and handed out to a select group of recipients at the Toronto Book Fair in May, 1977. It also appeared in full in the catalogue for the next auction, no. 102, June 29, 1977. The pamphlet is the most dramatic of his publications and one of two that are already scarce, it is entitled *A Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity*. He saw the problem as part of the recurring pattern

> We re-encounter the strange and remarkably familiar phenomena of an almost complete absence of interest among institutions, universities, collectors and the general public. Historical collections of the magnitude of the Gowan Papers are to be considered distinctive national treasures and private collectors and institutions feel that they belong in national institutions of an archival character, either provincial or federal. But national archival institutions are faced with the dilemma that they already

> have too much of the same type of material, and that their budgets are very much restricted For this reason the financial evaluation of the professional archivist differs greatly from that of the professional dealer or auctioneer If it may be assumed that manuscripts and letters have ideological as well as research value, overly under the influence of the academic the archivist is mainly concerned with the research value, and his conception of the financial value is coloured by the consideration of how much the material will contribute to research

A curious blend of dialectic, syllogistic logic, and debating technique make up the argument, which is further distended by his special verbosity What is clearly wrong is his remark that there is an absence of interest Many institutions and many collectors would be delighted to have them But not for $250,000

As Amtmann goes on to say, putting it in other words, if the Public Archives already have several thousand letters by Sir John A Macdonald, and large quantities of letters by the other prominent correspondents of Sir James Gowan, these are not worth a lot of money to them Except for the occasional letter of special importance, the unit value of his lot is much less to the Public Archives than to an individual collector And for a collector to consider spending such an amount he must consider how else the amount might be spent and he will probably come to the conclusion that it could be better spent elsewhere The problem is not a lack of interest The problem is $250,000.

Amtmann went on to note that there was an active market for fine, old houses, furniture and antiques, paintings, medals, Eskimo sculptures, and such There was also a strong market for the papers of Canadian poets, for the papers of Bertrand Russell, and generous support for the Disraeli Project at Queen's University Why not similar funds for letters by Sir John A Macdonald? He favoured the acquisition of old masters by the National Gallery, of all material that would enrich the cultural and intellectual life of the nation Why, then, was money not forthcoming for the Gowan Papers which were clearly national treasures? Laws prohibiting export do not encourage people to give them to libraries and archives

Indeed, he argued, no satisfactory mechanism exists to encourage such donations Many archivists and librarians feel that public spirited citizens have a responsibility to donate such treasures Others will pay high prices for some acquisitions, while still others deplore both high prices and important material leaving the country Few will make any effort to ensure that collections offered for sale receive a fair market value

The government gives the National Gallery a reasonably free hand because there is an established art market to determine fair value At this time in Canada, there was neither a sufficient market nor experience in the market to establish a fair price for the Gowan Papers Amtmann understood this but found it unsatisfactory He had his own answer He argued that he had attempted to foster a sense of pride in the Canadian heritage by his 'Open Letter to Canadian Archivists', by representing the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association in discussions with officials from the Department of the Secretary of State on the Cultural Property Export and Import Act and by participating in the orientation seminar arranged by the National Archival Appraisal Board While this last was particularly useful for mutual understanding between the trade and the institutions, it provided no criteria which might be useful in establishing a fair market value

> In the case of the Gowan Papers no market exists and therefore it is not possible to establish a fair market value Nobody will deny that the Gowan Papers have value in the context of Canadian heritage No one will suggest that the owner discard the material No one will suggest that due to the absence of a market the owner has to accept any price offered   If the owner wishes to discard and to destroy the material, this is his decision, if he desires to sell it, this is his right and he has the right to expect a fair price!
>
> It is my business to evaluate and estimate books, pamphlets, manuscripts and letters, and it is my considered opinion that $250,000 is a fair and realistic appraisal   It does not take into consideration that every single item is unique, that many of the items have special importance,

> and that the sum total of all this is a splendid manifestation of real national heritage for Canada and Canadians.... The fact that no Canadian market for the Gowan Papers exists [at his price] ... proves very clearly that Canadians are essentially uninterested in the history of their country, and are singularly endowed with apathetic feelings of national pride.... As long as materials of the nature of the Gowan Papers are not appreciated and are neglected by Canadians, the search for a Canadian identity will go on. It is not the governments and the institutions that are to blame, it is the Canadian intelligentsia which is at fault. It is not what is called the Canadian Establishment, the bankers, the brewers, the merchants, the rich and the powerful, who are at fault, but another establishment, more powerful and more insidious that has created this situation. Indeed, it is the ongoing conspiracy of the Canadian academic establishment that has retarded and delayed the discovery of the Canadian identity. The banker, the brewer, the lumber merchant can do much, but they cannot give the country a soul and an identity. The journalist, the poet, the writer, the professor, the librarian, the archivist can.... We need to build shrines for the men who made this country.... The sorry spectacle that no serious offer is forthcoming, that no market exists for a collection like the Gowan Papers, will one day be a thing of the past. In rejecting 2,500 letters written by Sir John A. Macdonald and his contemporaries, we reject our heritage and we reject our identity.

This is dialectic carried to the point of sophistry extended to the point of absurdity. He is restating with pyrotechnical eloquence his old contention that unless people pay what he thinks they should pay for one item of the enormous number that comprise Canadian cultural history, they have no interest in their history. This is simply not so. Also, he widened his target to include the academics, and he would probably find some support for this among the more nationalist of them. Others might argue that there is a Canadian identity, and that it is well known to the citizens of Moose Jaw, Trois Pistoles, and Orangeville

The sad thing is that the academics and the journalists have not yet discovered it, for it doesn't sit well with their preconceptions.

How much of his extravagant argument is deliberate exaggeration to make his point, and how much of it results from his being carried away by the joy of battle, is hard to say, but he tended to get people thinking constructively if only in self-defence. He continued the argument with declining intensity through the summer and into the autumn, in conversation, by correspondence, and in the auction catalogues. There he let the matter rest. For the next year he appeared wholly taken up with preparing and administering the auctions. He spent more time at home with his family. He was approaching his last months.

He was living off his reserves of energy. In 1978 he confided to a friend that he had a heart murmur and was supposed to cut down on cigarettes. Towards the end of 1978 he was struck down by a heart attack. He lingered for some days, appeared to rally, but then gradually weakened. He died in the Montreal General Hospital on January 9, 1979.

* * *

Bernard Amtmann would have been pleased and perhaps a little surprised at the warmth of the tributes which poured in after his death. Collectors, librarians, archivists, and bookmen in general, from Canada, the United States, and Britain expressed their regret at his passing, and gratitude for his contribution to the vitality of their world. Leading professional journals and general periodicals equally paid tribute. He had a remarkable talent for retaining the friendship and respect of many with whom he had continuing disagreements.

He arrived in this country in 1947 to begin a new life, knowing few people and with few assets and almost no money. At his death, thirty-two years later, he was considered by many to have had no peer as an authority on Canadiana.

He was in the antiquarian book business in Canada for all of these thirty-two years, selling books, pamphlets, maps, manuscripts, and printed ephemera. For the first twenty years he operated a regular retail business, and then opened an auction

house which increasingly became his main base He was largely self-educated and had a devotion to scholarship that earned him respect throughout the trade, the libraries, and the universities He encouraged the bookdealers to work in their joint interest towards common goals The young members of the ABAC in particular remember the help and encouragement he provided in their early years in the trade He was quick to protest government interference in fields he thought better left to individuals He repeatedly warned of the growing presence of Big Brother in the affairs of ordinary people

Bernard had a deep feeling of gratitude toward his adopted country He delighted in its lack of conformity and its open society His polemics concerning the search for identity were genuine, and, if he never fully understood the Canadian ethos, he understood it as well as the native-born who have argued the subject for more than a century

Bernard Amtmann came from a culture that had been developing for hundreds of years He came to a culture that still reflected the physical task of subduing a wilderness He assumed the role of a gadfly, perhaps too easily, seeming to create controversy for its own sake If his self-appointed role of making Canadians more aware of their history and its artifacts was repetitive and idealistic, it was genuine and it went a long way toward achieving its purpose He brought a new awareness to the field and a new respectability to dealing in it

Away from business he was a very private person His brother and sister remember him as a young man on social occasions being charming but reserved He was strong-willed, enterprising, and creative sure of his ability to compete and win He was a delightful host and a gentle parent He gained the respect of his adopted son Beckett and was at once parent, companion, mentor, and friend to the boy

Bernard Amtmann is remembered with respect and affection At the Annual Meeting of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada, in Toronto on May 14, 1979, the following resolution was adopted ‘That ABAC sponsor an Amtmann Circle to commemorate the memory of our founding president, Bernard Amtmann’ Membership in the Circle was open to all who shared his objectives and aspirations The object

of the Circle was to commemorate Bernard Amtmann's name by sponsoring scholarly projects in his fields of interest: bibliography, Canadian history, bookselling, and book collecting. The Steering Committee suggested as an early project the production of a short biography and an outline of his work.

This brief memoir is intended to serve that purpose, a not uncritical tribute to a notable bookseller, a devoted scholar, and a respected friend.

Epilogue

IN JUNE, 1984, John Archer gave an informal talk to the Amtmann Circle, meeting in Massey College in the University of Toronto. It was appropriate for him to speak; he had been closer to Bernard Amtmann than any other man since Bernard arrived in Canada.

Archer ascribed Amtmann's great strength as a dealer to his all-embracing view of Canadiana, his emphasis on the importance of ephemera, the railway manuals, schedules of canal barges, flyers for sports' days, sermons, menus, and university lectures, all of which found a place in his catalogues. He thought Amtmann's greatest accomplishment was his *Short-Title Catalogue* which listed many thousands of titles not recorded elsewhere.

Perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Amtmann, Dr. Archer continued, was being asked by the Library of Congress in Washington to be their agent in building such a collection, but he declined, not wanting to be responsible for shipping so much unique material out of the country. He had hoped that one day the Public Archives of Canada might ask him to collect for them.

Amtmann's first contact with Canadians had been during the war. He had been impressed by the Canadian troops he encountered, and he and Archer had shared the special common ground of both having been members of commando units and surviving the rigours of hand-to-hand combat. He thought Canada the freest country in the world, and was surprised in due course to learn how few Canadians realized it.

His own nature was European rather than British, and he thought France led the world in the finer things of life. He respected the German contribution to literature and music, and the British tradition of fair play and sound laws, the ultimate freedom being from the heavy hand of government.

Amtmann never understood the English establishment in Canada, and the failure of many English Canadians to take advantage of and profit from the French fact. He sympathized

with those fostering the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, who along with the leaders of the Prairie Provinces struggled against the corporate interests of Eastern Canada.

He dubbed the archivists the undertakers of Canadian culture. The Public Archives came in for special criticism, in spite of having earned a distinguished reputation as one of the foremost public archival institutions in North America, in spite of not having special funds for acquisitions, and in spite of a Canadian tradition of donations to Canadian archives. The Public Archives were a continuing target of this newly arrived apostle of Canadian culture.

Archer found Amtmann's thesis somewhat undermined by public knowledge that criticism of those who did not buy at his auctions and who criticized his pricing, was criticism of those who did not do as much business with him as he would have wished. He added that librarians are traditionally buyers from catalogues more than at auctions, perhaps inevitable in a country as vast as Canada. By 1970, Amtmann had almost deserted the second-hand book catalogue field in favour of auctions. 'What was surprising in all this is that Bernard remained friends with many of the archivists in spite of his criticisms, and certainly the National Library never broke off relations.' Archer concluded with an interesting analogy:

> I have often thought that Bernard's bridge game was a microcosm of his day-to-day exchanges. He had intuitive card sense but ignored the conventions. If a hand pleased him he would bid it to the limit and beyond. If he wasn't happy with his hand he would pass in the face of a demand bid. He was an egoist and sometimes brilliant, he was no follower, no patient plowman but a flashing meteor. And he usually lost! And he was a gracious loser, once the game was over.

* * *

Again, this is not biography but personal recollections supported by a few facts. There is much we do not know about Bernard Amtmann and a few things we have omitted because we thought Bernard would have preferred them to be left out

In this vein we have avoided the story of the thief who stole two books from an important library He sold them to Amtmann, who returned them to the library with his compliments, before the loss had been discovered In another instance, he put a leading Canadian writer in contact with an institutional buyer of literary manuscripts, and sued when he was not paid what he considered an adequate fee for the resulting sale Another institution still has not paid his bill for a valuation which they thought too high In both cases he refused to reduce his fee and was paid nothing

Appendix A

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE LIFE OF BERNARD AMTMANN

1907 Born July 11, in Vienna, Austria

1913 Started School, attended for eight years, leaving at 14

1914-18 First World War, which ended with Austria among the defeated nations

1919 20 Amtmann children among those sent abroad to escape the near-starvation conditions of post-war Vienna

1921 End of formal education, BA's first job, as a bank messenger

1920s Various clerical jobs

1930s In the early 30s, various business ventures with indifferent success In later 30s, became established in photographic business

1934 New Austrian constitution, modelled on the German Chancellor Dollfuss shot by Nazi Stormtroopers

1938 Germans occupy Austria BA leaves, goes to France, and joins army

1939 Outbreak of Second World War

1940 Germans conquer Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and France BA and his parents settle at Montauban in unoccupied France, he works at manual jobs as a labourer, gardener, laundryman, dishwasher, hotel waiter, and others He joins the French underground, becomes head of a commando unit engaged in sabotage

1944 After Allied invasion of Europe and the liberation of France, BA returns to the French Army with the rank of sergeant

1945 Germany surrendered in May and Japan in August The next two years BA again works at odd jobs, but now buys and sells books as well

1947 In October, BA and his mother arrive in Ottawa as landed immigrants Within days he is buying and selling books

1948 He issues his first catalogue the first of sixteen issued in his three years in Ottawa

1950 BA and his mother move to Montreal in early November

1951 He opens a shop on Greene Avenue, Westmount in May A decade of developing the business and making a reputation

1954 BA becomes a Canadian citizen

1960 BA incorporates as Bernard Amtmann, Inc He also establishes Laurie Hill Ltd

1966 Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada is organized, with Bernard Amtmann as first president At the annual meeting of the Canadian Library Association in Calgary, BA presents his plan for compiling and publishing a Canadian National Bibliography

1967 BA establishes Montreal Book Auctions, with the first sale at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Montreal April 26, 1967

1968 Arranges a joint venture with Christie, Manson & Woods of London, England; sales run from April, 1969, to September, 1970 Montreal Book Auctions resume sales in December, 1970

1970 Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts

1971-73 The publication of BA's *Short-Title Catalogue*, with some 30,000 titles, including 10,000 not recorded elsewhere

1972 Marries Airdrie Wilson of Montreal

1972-73 Sale of the Bernard Amtmann, Inc 's business records to the University of Montreal

1974 Awarded the degree of Honorary Doctor of Laws by the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan

1976 Sale of his bibliographical archives to the National Library

1977 The Gowan Papers episode

1978-79 Bernard Amtmann's last year and final illness, ending with his death January 9, 1979

Appendix B

LIST OF BERNARD AMTMANN'S PUBLICATIONS AS AUTHOR, COMPILER OR PUBLISHER

Bibliography of Canadian Children's Books and Books for Young People, 1841-1867. Livres de l'enfance & livres de la jeunesse du Canada 1841-1867. Montreal, 1977.

Canadian Art Auction Record. [Vol. I.] 1969. Compiled by H.C. Campbell, Chief Librarian, Toronto Public Libraries. Willowdale, Ont.: Canadian Antiques and Fine Arts, [1970]. Volumes I and II were published by this company in Willowdale and Toronto, respectively; volumes III to VI were published in Montreal by Bernard Amtmann, Inc.

[do.] [Vol. II], 1970. Toronto, [1971].

[do.] Vol. III, 1971. Montreal: Bernard Amtmann, Inc., 1973.

[do.] Vol. IV, 1972. Montreal, 1973.

[do.] Vol. V, 1973. Montreal, 1974.

[do.] Vol. VI, 1974. Montreal, 1975.

Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity. Montreal, 1977. 12p. About 200 copies printed, without limitation statement. Plain blue wrapper, tied with a gold cord. Reprinted in Montreal Book Auctions catalogue 102, June, 1977.

Contributions to a Dictionary of Canadian Pseudonyms and Anonymous Works relating to Canada. Contributions à un dictionnaire des pseudonymes canadiens et des ouvrages anonymes relatifs au Canada. Montreal, 1973.

Contributions to a Short-Title Catalogue of Canadiana. Mont-

real, 1971-73 4 vols, or 5 vols interleaved Bound in maroon buckram

Early Canadian Children's Books, 1763-1840 A bibliographical investigation into the nature and extent of early Canadian children's books and books for young people Livres de l'enfance & livres de la jeunesse au Canada, 1763-1840 Etude bibliographique Montreal, 1976 Illustrated title pages reproduced

Montreal Book Auction Records, 1967-1971 Montreal, 1972

[do] Vol II, 1972 Montreal, 1973

[do] Vol III, 1973-1974 Montreal, 1976

[do] Vol IV, 1975-76 Montreal, 1978

[do] Vol V, 1977-1978 Montreal, 1979 Volumes VI to VIII were published by the successor firm, Canada Book Auctions, bringing the auction records up to 1982 Volume VII is cumulative for the years 1967-1980, and volume VIII records 1981 82 It omits the sale of March, 1983

Montreal Book Auctions L'Encan des livres de Montreal Some highlights of the season, 1970-71 Quelques prix remarquables Montreal 1971 [8]p Promotional pamphlet for the coming season, with subscription form slipped in

The North-West Passage A poem by George Stovin Venables Ottawa, 1950 12p Card cover in one of two colours, off white or pale blue Facsimile reprint of the poem which won the Chancellor's Medal at Cambridge University in 1831 An edition of 100 copies

Riel Diary [prospectus] Montreal, 1971 [8]p

Abacus Published in Montreal, fourteen numbers appeared irregularly, from July, 1967, to late 1970 or 1971 Written by

Amtmann to continue discussions raised at meetings of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada, the first four letters being an acronym. He was assisted by Wilham Morley and others.

Canadian Notes & Queries. Questions et réponses canadiennes first appeared as a supplement to *Abacus* in September, 1969, and has continued more or less regularly to the present day, number 36 appearing in the fall of 1986. Amtmann published the first 10 issues to June, 1974, after which it was financed by other dealers, notably Alfred Van Peteghem of Montreal, and John Wray of Alliston, Ontario. Most of the editorial work has been done over the years by William Morley, with the assistance of associate editors, most recently Michel Theriault and Barbara Teatero.

Erasmus Circle Bulletin of Montreal. Le Cercle Erasme de Montréal. Three numbers were published, the first in November, 1970, and two in 1971.

Bernard Amtmann Inc. and Montreal Book Auctions issued approximately four hundred lists and catalogues from 1948 to 1979. Amtmann often wrote long notes in his catalogues on bibliographical and other subjects. For example, three of his first four catalogues, nos. 2, 3, and 4, issued from Ottawa in 1950, include a lengthy entry on his first Canadian object of scrutiny, the French soldier and administrator La Potherie. His letters to the editor appeared in several newspapers and journals.

The Bernard Amtmann papers in the Literary Manuscripts Collection of the National Library of Canada, in particular Unit 11, "Bibliographer, Publisher and Publicist," include notes towards several bibliographies which he did not complete, and a series called "Projects, Schemes and Controversies", which together show the extent of his thoughts and the variety of his interests.

We conclude this list with Willy Amtmann's book on the history of music in Canada. It is here because of Bernard's

significant albeit small role, and also because of the book's intrinsic importance.

Amtmann, Willy. *Music in Canada 1600-1800*. Montreal: Habitex Books, 1975. 320p. Published in an edition of about 600 copies.

[do.] *La musique au Québec, 1600-1875*. Traduction de Michelle Pharand. Montreal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1976. 420p. Illustrated by eight coloured plates and eighty illustrations in black and white. The French edition adds a hundred pages and extensive illustrations, and includes a section on music in Quebec in the nineteenth century. It was published in an edition of just over 6,000 copies. Both editions are now scarce.

Willy Amtmann received his degree of Bachelor of Music from the University of Toronto, Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, New York, and his Doctorate in Musicology from the University of Strasbourg, France. He taught at Carleton University in Ottawa from 1968 until his retirement in 1976; his courses included the first in the history of music in Canada given at a Canadian university.

Appendix C

MONTREAL BOOK AUCTIONS / CANADA BOOK AUCTIONS

The company known variously as Montreal Book Auctions / Christie's (Canada) with Montreal Book Auctions / Canada Book Auctions, held 149 sales [really 152 sales, as is shown below], from April, 1967, to March, 1983, as follows:

Montreal Book Auctions, sales 1 to 6, April, 1967, to November, 1968.

Christie's (Canada) with Montreal Book Auctions held sales from April, 1969, to September, 1970. The numbering is muddled by the fact that there are fewer sales than catalogues, and also by the fact that they began the numbers again at 1 and there was no sale or catalogue 13. The sequence of sales is as follows: 1, 2, 3 part one, 3 part two, 4 part one, 4 part two, 5 part one, 5 part two, 6 part one, 6 part two, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 (with two catalogues differing only in the colours of their covers, some are green and some are white), and 17. The last sale was held on September 28, 1970. A further complication results from the fact that the catalogues for the art sales were usually unnumbered. Sales 9, 11, 14, and 17 were art auctions.

Montreal Book Auctions resumed with sale 18, on December, 1970, and continued to May, 1979. The last two sales were held after Bernard Amtmann's death; they are numbers 119 and 120, held morning and afternoon on May 23, 1979.

The auction house was then purchased by a group headed by Craig Fraser, an old friend of Amtmann's, and the proprietor of Specialty Book Concern. It was moved to Toronto and held its first sale in October, 1979, under the name, Canada Book Auctions.

Canada Book Auctions held twenty-three sales, numbers 121 to 143, October, 1979, to March, 1983. The company was disbanded in 1983, after having paid off all its creditors.

All sales of the three companies were held in either Montreal or Toronto (including sale 47, held in Toronto, April 28, 1973) with the exceptions of sales 11 and 17, held April 30, 1970, and September 28, 1970, in Ottawa and Calgary, respectively.

A Note on the Authors

Both were longtime friends of Bernard Amtmann, John Archer being his closest friend for the last three decades of his life. They were both admirers, but each had enough differences of opinion with him over the years to be convinced that his admiration was not uncritical.

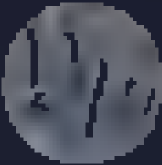
After a distinguished career as historian, archivist, and librarian, Dr. John Archer retired as President of the University of Regina, which he still serves as Professor Emeritus. John Mappin left a family business twenty years ago to become an antiquarian bookdealer.

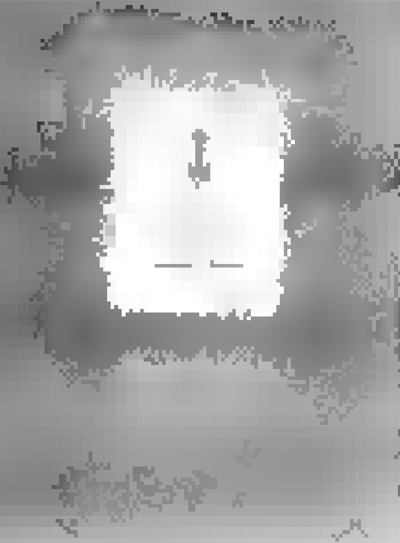
Archer was Chief Librarian at the McLennan Library of McGill University and Mappin was Chairman of the Board of the Westmount Public Library, Montreal, for many years. Both have built collections, bought and sold rare books and are regularly consulted as evaluators of books, manuscripts, and printed ephemera. Both have been members of the National Archives Appraisal Board since its formation. They met as dinner guests of Bernard Amtmann.

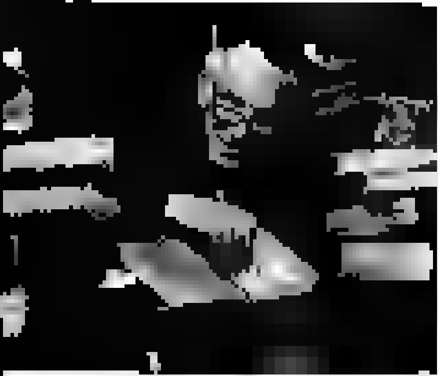
This *Personal Memoir* has been printed in an edition of
five hundred Copies 1 to 100 are in boards and signed
by the authors, 101 to 500 are in printed wrappers.

This is Number 63

John







BERNARD M. MANN

1902 — 1974

A PERSONAL MEMOIR

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